

Suspected Ben Laden aide turned in

MUNICH (AP) — A suspected top aide to Osama Ben Laden, the Saudi exile accused of being behind the U.S. embassy bombings in Africa this summer, was turned over to American officials Sunday for extradition to the United States. Mamdouh Mahmud Salim was taken to Munich's airport and placed on a flight to the United States, Bavarian Justice Ministry spokesman Gerhard Zierl said. Zierl and airport officials said they did not have information on the flight's arrival time or destination since it was a U.S. government plane, not a commercial airliner. Bavarian Interior Minister Guenther Beckstein said the extradition was an "excellent example of international cooperation of security officials in the fight against terrorism." Salim, 40, had been jailed since his arrest in Bavaria three months ago on a U.S. warrant. A Munich state court approved his extradition on Nov. 27.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراي

Iraq: Thousands of casualties in attack

WASHINGTON (R) — Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations said Sunday that U.S. and British attacks on Iraq killed or wounded thousands of people. "There has been enormous damage, mainly to the civilian infrastructure and to human life. I am told the casualties are in thousands, in terms of people who were killed or wounded, but we don't have any final figures," Nizar Hamdoun told CNN. Hamdoun said Iraq would ask the U.N. Security Council to lift immediately the economic sanctions imposed after it invaded Kuwait in 1990. "We think we deserve that," he said. It will argue that the lack of poisonous gases from the U.S. air raids showed that it was not developing chemical or biological weapons, the ambassador added.

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Albright: U.S. may attack Iraq again Saddam declares Iraq victorious

Agencies

DECLARING MISSION accomplished, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright nevertheless said Sunday the United States may have to strike at Iraq again if Saddam Hussein rebuilds his country's weapons of mass destruction capability.

"We reserve the right to use force again," Albright said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Albright made her comments as Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, in his first public comment since the end of the U.S. and British air strikes, said the Iraqi people have triumphed.

"You have been worthy to what your leadership expected from you — and to your brother and comrade, Saddam Hussein," the president said.

"God will repay you well and crown your heart with clear victory."

His brief comments, provided on tape to Qatar's Al Jazeera Television and other broadcast outlets, also chided the Arab World for not supporting Iraq in its dispute over U.N. weapons inspections and sanctions.

Saddam told the Iraqis: "Your sacrifice... awakened those who are asleep or those who pretended to be sick, a lot of whom exist in the Arab Nation and in the world."

President Clinton and his U.S. military commanders, meanwhile, were considering issuing orders halting the reinforcements of ground and air forces ordered in recent days to guard against an aggressive Iraqi response to the strikes, according to two senior defence officials who spoke Sunday on condition of anonymity.

Thousands of ground troops and additional air crews were rolling out to deploy to the Gulf region. If the administration opts to halt the deployments, the officials

said, units that have not yet deployed would be told to remain in their bases and some en route to the Gulf ordered to return home.

Albright called the three days of strikes that ended Saturday a "successfully accomplished mission" but she pointed to their limited effect by acknowledging that the threat posed by Iraq's chemical and biological weapons capability cannot be completely erased.

"Obviously it is very hard to say that everything that he has in weapons of mass destruction has been destroyed, but his capability of threatening his neighbours and delivering [weapons] has been severely degraded," Albright said.

Even as U.S. warplanes returned to their pre-strike mission of conducting deny-flight missions over southern Iraq, Albright said U.S. strategy against Iraq is shifting toward overturning Saddam's

regime.

"We would like to see a different regime," Albright said. "That is what we are going to be working towards by more active support of the various opposition groups."

Defence Secretary William Cohen, speaking on CBS's "Face the Nation," said he expects Iraq will try to repair and rebuild the military facilities destroyed in the airstrikes. But he said, "We're going to continue to be there."

In announcing a halt to the air strikes Saturday, President Clinton said he was satisfied the bombs and missiles had inflicted "significant damage" on the facilities and mechanisms that support Iraq's clandestine efforts to build weapons of mass destruction.

The president said the United States will maintain a strong military presence in the Arabian Gulf, and "we will remain ready to use it" if

Saddam tries to rebuild his weapons of mass destruction, strikes at his neighbours, challenges allied aircraft or moves against Kurdish rebels. Clinton spoke just a few hours after the House of Representatives voted to impeach him.

In London, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said, "We set out to diminish and degrade Saddam's military capability, and we have done so."

In Baghdad, the Iraqi government vowed it would refuse all cooperation with U.N. weapons inspectors, who left the country several days ago. Clinton said he would welcome a return to U.N. inspections, but only if Saddam took "concrete, affirmative and demonstrable actions" to show he would allow unfettered access to all sites suspected of illicit weapons development.

(Continued on page 12)



HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Sunday talks with travellers on the Jordanian-Iraqi border (Petra photo)

During visit to Iraqi-Jordanian border: Regent calls for ending suffering of Iraqi people

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Sunday called for collective world efforts to end the suffering of the Iraqi people and for a review of the sanctions regime imposed on that country.

In remarks to Jordan Television during a visit to the Iraqi-Jordanian border yesterday evening, Prince Hassan stressed the need for the resumption of dialogue between Iraq and the international community and for definition of the political objectives of the world community in Iraq.

"We are meeting with senior Jordanian officials near the borders with Iraq in order to reaffirm the continued interaction between the Jordanian and Iraqi people," Prince Hassan said.

Referring to U.S. and British military strikes against Iraq that ended on Saturday evening, the Regent said: "The

cessation of military strikes naturally leads to continued demands for a resumption of dialogue between Iraq and the world community on various issues, the most important of which is the humanitarian dimension which has direct effect on the Iraqi people."

"We have witnessed great concern by the humanitarian organisations, including those in Jordan where the Hashemite Charity Organisation is exerting efforts and is calling on the public in Jordan to make donations for the people of Iraq," said Prince Hassan.

"We realise this is not a substitute for the lifting of sanctions on Iraq as His Majesty King Hussein has declared on many occasions. We support ending the suffering of the Iraqi people, especially that the military strikes are now over. We have to renew our concentration on the humanitarian dimension. The Jordanian people are expressing their feelings with the Iraqi people especially during the past few days that witnessed an escalation of attacks on Iraq," the Regent said.

He added that Jordan is deeply concerned over the essential services in Iraq, expressing relief that the infrastructure services like water and electricity had not been affected by the strikes.

On the diplomatic front, the Crown Prince said: "We are concerned about the political objectives in the coming stage and in this respect we have noticed the French president's concern in the past few hours and his call for a new mechanism to deal with the Iraqi crisis. I would like to stress that the security dimension is not the sole dimension that requires attention at this stage."

(Continued on page 12)

Iraqis express relief, pride after strikes end

By Tareq Ayyoub in Baghdad with agency dispatches

BAGHDAD — Iraqis were overwhelmed with emotions of relief, pride and joy on Sunday after U.S. and British leaders announced that a bombing campaign against Iraq had ended after 70 hours.

"Thank God it is all over. It is a victory for us and for our nation," said Iraqi office boy Hazim Muhaisen, a father of six. "We will reconstruct our country again, we will continue our steadfastness in the face of the aggressors," he told the Jordan Times as he handpicked tomatoes from a vegetable stall in a busy Baghdad street.

"We are not afraid of these strikes as we have become used to this type of life," said Nazim Jassim, a butcher at Azamiyah neighbourhood in the heart of the capital hit by the punitive strikes launched in the early hours of Thursday.

"This is not a war against Iraq," said street vendor Hamdi Saleh. "It is another crusade masterminded by

the American administration which is controlled by the Zionist enemy against Islam and the whole Arab Nation," he said, echoing commonly held views.

They were speaking hours after U.S. President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced in separate statements that the operation, code-named Desert Fox, had been completed.

Blair said the strikes, planned to last four days, could resume again if needed to contain Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

President Saddam Hussein, meanwhile, told Iraqis they had achieved victory in the wake of four days of the air strikes.

"You were up to the level that your leadership and brother and comrade Saddam Hussein had hoped you would be at... so God rewarded you and delighted your hearts with the crown of victory," Saddam said in a taped address broadcast over the Qatari satellite television station Al Jazeera.

It was unclear where the end of the

bombings would leave the political stalemate between Iraq and the United States over U.N.-mandated weapons inspections. Iraqi officials had vowed in recent days not to make any compromises.

Iraqi Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan appeared on Saturday to all but slam the door on the return of experts of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) overseeing the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The inspectors left Baghdad on Wednesday after their Australian chief, Richard Butler, said in a report that Iraq was not cooperating fully with his team.

Clinton said he remained ready to resume military action against Iraq if it fails to allow UNSCOM to resume its work.

But on the streets, Iraqi men, women and children bristled with defiance as they resumed their normal life after enduring four nights of massive bombardment which killed dozens of civilians and soldiers. Iraqi officials have refrained from giving a detailed death toll.

(Continued on page 12)

Amman protest voices support for Iraq, condemns U.S., U.K.

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — More than 3,000 Jordanians Sunday marched peacefully from Al Hussein Mosque to Al Hashimiyeh Square in downtown Amman shouting anti-U.S.-U.K. slogans and protesting against the recent allied air strikes on Iraq.

Islamists, opposition figures, women organisations' representatives and other citizens joined the march yelling "Clinton and Blair are our enemies. Saddam and Iraqis are our brothers."

The demonstrators lashed out at the U.S.-led cruise missile and bomb strikes on Baghdad, chanting "No to UNSCOM's report is a lie." "Clinton and Blair are criminals. We call for prosecuting them."

Unlike Saturday's student demonstration on the University of Jordan campus and other rallies on Thursday and Friday in different parts of Amman where anti-riot forces armed with batons and tear gas were on hand, yesterday's street protest saw only ordinary police standing by and watching the demonstration with no interference. Roads leading to the area were closed for precautionary reasons, according to authorities.

"Mass killing is committed



Protesters march in downtown Amman on Sunday, chanting slogans voicing support for the Iraqi people and denouncing the U.S. and British air strikes on the Arab country (photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

by U.S. criminals." "Clinton, your plans did not work out," read tens of banners carried by men and women along two and-a-half kilometres of the march. Protesters also shouted

"No to American Zionists and their embassies in our country" and sang traditional Iraqi songs.

(Continued on page 12)

U.N. relief workers to return to Iraq in days

BAGHDAD (R) — United Nations humanitarian workers will return to Baghdad by Wednesday to resume their work in the wake of U.S. and British air strikes. U.N. Special envoy Prakash Shah said Sunday.

"The expectation is that the international staff who were relocated during the bombings will return most probably Wednesday, maybe even a day earlier... and the food-for-oil program will be resumed in full measure," Shah told

Reuters. Shah, special representative of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan in Baghdad, said Annan was relieved that the military campaign was suspended after 70 hours.

He said the Security Council would hold a session Monday to discuss the Iraq crisis.

"We expected that the Security Council will have a meeting Monday in New York and they will deal with the number of issues that has come up as a result of the developments in the last few days," Shah said.

VIENNA (AP) — Now that U.S.-British air strikes against Iraq are over, America's European partners are looking to U.N. chief Kofi Annan to find a way to maintain arms controls against Baghdad.

"We trust that a political dialogue can be undertaken as soon as possible, primarily with the involvement of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan," Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima said after U.S. President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced an end to the air strikes.

Austria currently holds the rotating presidency of the 15-member European Union. Austria's foreign minister, Wolfgang Schuess-

sel, said the focus should be on a "long-term political solution" to ensure that Iraq complies with U.N. orders to destroy all long-range missiles and mass destruction weapons.

Schuessel said such a political solution must "bring to an end the humanitarian suffering of the Iraqi people" and restore cooperation between Baghdad and the United Nations.

The challenge facing Annan, however, would be to find a formula for main-

PARIS (R) — French President Jacques Chirac, seeking to seize the diplomatic initiative following the U.S.-led bombing of Iraq, called Sunday for a review of the eight-year-old international oil embargo on Baghdad.

As French commentators and government supporters continued to flay the United States and Britain for their joint, four-day offensive, Chirac preferred to focus on the future.

"First of all, we must improve the living conditions of the Iraqi people who have suffered for so many years. This is possible and necessary. We have to do it very quickly and France has a certain number of proposals to put forward," he said.

Acknowledging that the oil embargo imposed on Iraq fol-

lowing the 1991 Gulf war was a politically sensitive issue, Chirac indicated that he thought the conditions should be eased — so long as checks remained on Iraq's weapon building programme.

"If a positive decision [on the embargo] is taken, then this would presuppose that there are effective controls on armaments, and also a very strict control on the revenues Iraq draws from its petrol sales," he said in a brief statement.

Under the terms of the present embargo, Iraq can export about 1.8 million barrels of oil a day under a monitored humanitarian exchange for food and medicine.

Some of the oil money has also gone toward funding U.N. weapons inspections within Iraq. The United States and

Britain staged a four-day-long air campaign against Iraq after weapons inspectors said Baghdad was hindering the inspectors' work.

Both France's leftist government and Chirac, a conservative, distanced themselves from the strikes. But at the same time, anxious not to incur the wrath of their U.S. allies, they laid the blame for the military escalation firmly on the Iraqis.

Commentators and politicians have been much more damning of the U.S. and Britain.

The head of Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's Socialist party, Francois Hollande, told France 2 television Sunday that he thought the U.S. had been weakened by the attacks while the Iraq leadership had emerged strengthened.

France's foreign minister, Hubert Vedrine, said French diplomats were already working on proposals for "a new form of cooperation between the United Nations and Iraq to restore the role of the U.N. Security Council."

In Bonn, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer also called Sunday for a new initiative to maintain arms control and to "improve the conditions of the Iraqi people."

German defence minister, Rudolf Scharping, said Russia should also play a role in reviving "a political dialogue [with Iraq] as soon as possible."

America's allies looking to Annan to pick up the pieces after Desert Fox

taining arms controls against Iraq that would satisfy both President Saddam Hussein's government and the United States and Britain.

Washington and London have traditionally taken the strongest positions within the U.N. Security Council in refusing to relax sweeping economic sanctions until U.N. inspectors certify that Baghdad has destroyed all its long-range missiles and weapons of mass destruction.

That is the main condition before the U.N. Security Council will lift sanctions imposed in 1990 after Saddam invaded Kuwait, touching off the 1991 Gulf war.

On Saturday, Iraq's vice president, Taha Yassin Ramadan, made clear that his government will no longer work with inspectors from the U.N. Special Commission, or UNSCOM.

Claims by U.N. chief inspector Richard Butler that Iraq was not cooperating fully with his teams led to the four days of air strikes.

Weakened Saddam must remain 'caged' — Blair

LONDON (R) — British Prime Minister Tony Blair said Sunday four nights of strikes against Iraq had severely weakened President Saddam Hussein's military capability, and outlined a diplomatic strategy to keep him "in his cage."

Hours after he and President Clinton announced an end to Operation Desert Fox, Blair said the two countries were "ready to strike again if he again poses a threat to his neighbours, or develops weapons of mass destruction."

He said over 400 cruise missile launches and more than 200 strikes from aircraft had severely damaged Iraq's ability to produce and repair ballistic missiles, and set back his chemical and biological weapons programmes.

They had hit Iraqi air defences and the command and control network. Saddam uses to pass on his orders, and demonstrated that the United States and Britain could strike hard at his elite Republican Guard, a key prop of his regime.

"Parts of his programme would take years to reconstitute, even without sanctions, and absorb the bulk of his resources and effort for all that time," Blair told a news conference.

Chief of Defence Staff Sir Charles Guthrie showed journalists film of bombs scoring direct hits on two key targets — a hangar which he said

housed pilotless aircraft designed to drop anthrax bombs, and a Republican Guard brigade headquarters.

"This campaign has been a precise and controlled use of force to prevent the evil of Saddam being visited on others in the Gulf region," Guthrie said.

Blair announced that Britain was sending an aircraft carrier, the HMS *Invincible*, to the Gulf to reinforce its Tornado aircraft in Kuwait as part of a "strategy of containment."

It will arrive in January, as the Holy Month of Ramadan comes to an end.

"The sending of the aircraft carrier is a very big signal... that we are not going away," said Defence Secretary George Robertson.

Blair said the allies would intensify their surveillance of the Baghdad regime. "We will know what is happening, and whether Saddam is yet again getting into a position to threaten others. If he is, he knows what to expect," he added.

He said sanctions which Saddam had managed to circumvent to increase his arsenal of deadly weapons, had to be reinforced by intercepting suspect traffic in the Gulf.

Britain planned "an intensive diplomatic process" with other U.N. Security Council members, Middle Eastern countries and its European allies "to forge a new strategy

for stability in relations between the international community and Iraq."

Foreign Secretary Robin Cook will begin this process Monday with a meeting in London with his German counterpart Joschka Fischer. He said they would discuss how Europe could better target aid to help the needy of Iraq.

Blair said Britain would like the United Nations weapons monitoring team UNSCOM, whose work of identifying Iraq's capability to make weapons of mass destruction Saddam had repeatedly frustrated, to return to Iraq.

But they could not return on the old basis. "We would need a new and better regime. Iraq will have to demonstrate in practical ways a completely different order of readiness to fulfil its obligations in future if the UNSCOM route is to have any part to play."

Finally, Blair said, "we will continue to engage with the Iraqi opposition to help them develop their vision of a better Iraq."

"I recognise that not everyone around the world has welcomed this action," he said in an apparent reference to the outraged reactions of Russia and China and the unease of France.

"But I believe at heart most know its necessity," he said. "It sends a very clear message to Saddam Hussein that we will not sit by."



IN THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY: Christian boys Sunday run through large ancient colonnade that lines the main nave in the Church of the Nativity, the traditional birthplace of Jesus Christ, as early morning light pours in through windows near the wooden ceiling. A silver star inlaid in a marble floor within a small niche in the lower 'grotto' of the ancient church pinpoints for visitors the traditional birthplace of Jesus. The Church of the Nativity is one of the world's oldest churches, built by Constantine the Great, emperor of Rome, in the year 330 AD and rebuilt in the 6th century. The large columns are from the 6th century. As Christmas approaches, more and more tourists are flocking to Bethlehem (Reuters photo)

Use of force only complicated solution to Iraq crisis, Yeltsin says

MOSCOW (AP) — President Boris Yeltsin said Sunday that the U.S.-British air strikes had only complicated any solution to the Iraqi crisis, and welcomed the end to the bombardment.

"Reason has finally prevailed," he said in a statement transmitted by Russian news agencies. "Now the international community should draw serious conclusions from these tragic events."

The United States and Britain halted air strikes against Iraq on Saturday after four days of attacks,

saying their forces had inflicted "significant damage" on Iraq's military.

"It still remains to fully assess the negative political consequences the bombardment led to, not to speak of the victims among the civilian population and the significant damage to the Iraqi economy, which was already dried by the sanctions," Yeltsin was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency.

"However, now it is absolutely clear that the use of force only complicated the solution of the Iraqi problem."

Yeltsin said that Russia insisted on the creation of a multipolar system in the world and the strengthening of the United Nations' role.

"This is the universal organisation that is charged with guaranteeing collective responses to the new, dangerous challenges confronted by the family of nations. Nobody has the right to violate the U.N. Charter, which for more than half a century has been the reliable guarantee of peace and stability," he said.

Yeltsin called on Iraq to fulfil the U.N. resolutions

that would allow the lifting of sanctions. However, he said that the world must not neglect Iraq's humanitarian needs, saying that "now like never before" the Iraqis needed massive food and medical aid.

The Iraq crisis has underlined Moscow's loss of global influence and the unhappiness of some Russian political leaders and officials about close post-Soviet ties with the West. Part of Yeltsin's anger stemmed from his not being informed in advance about the air strikes.

Jerusalem blast may be linked to stabbings — radio

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Police were investigating Sunday whether an Israeli held in connection with a blast in Jerusalem was involved in the stabbing of seven Arabs, Israel's Army Radio said.

Police said they arrested a Jewish man overnight who was lightly wounded in an explosion near Jerusalem's Old City. The radio said the suspect may have been planning a bomb against Arabs when it blew up prematurely.

A Jerusalem judge issued a gag order on details of the case. A police spokesman said the man, wounded in the hand, was being held along with three companions.

"Police are checking possible links between the Israeli who was wounded this morning in an explosion... and the stabbings," the radio said.

Israeli police believe a Jewish serial killer out to avenge the killings of Jews by Palestinians may be behind the stabbing of seven Arabs in the past year. Two of the victims died in knife attacks.

The stabbings began in late 1997 in Mea Shearim, the heart of ultra-Orthodox Jewish life in Jerusalem.

Opposition claims officers executed

CAIRO (AP) — An Iraqi opposition group claimed Sunday that a cousin of Saddam Hussein who commands the military in the southern region has executed several army officers for disobeying orders.

Among those executed was the commander of the 11th Mechanised Division in the southern city of Amarah, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq said in a statement faxed to The

Associated Press in Cairo.

The cousin, former Defence Minister Ali Hasan Al Majid, was given the command of the predominantly Shiite southern region as part of a reorganisation by Saddam, who divided the country into four military districts on Wednesday.

The Supreme Council said the executions took place immediately after Al Majid took control.

The Supreme Council is based in Iran, and there has

been no independent confirmation of the report. Iraqi authorities do not comment on such claims.

Besides Al Majid, Saddam gave control of the other three new commands to trusted aides. The move was apparently aimed at thwarting possible civilian uprising in case U.S. and British air strikes inflicted heavy military damage.

The southern Shiite districts have long been trouble spots for Saddam's government.

Europe press sees tragedy, farce in Clinton woes

PARIS (R) — European newspapers warned Sunday that U.S. democracy risked being undermined by Bill Clinton's impeachment, but were markedly more critical of the president than when the Monica Lewinsky sex scandal first broke.

While political leaders on this side of the Atlantic maintained a stony silence over Clinton's latest woes, commentators relished describing them in terms of "tragedy," "madness," "decadence" and "farce."

Many pointed out the irony of a superpower president ordering last week's strikes on Iraq while being threatened with removal from office at home.

"Not since the Tet offensive of 1968 has America experienced a festive season so traumatic and absurd at the same time," Italy's *Corriere della Sera* newspaper said in an editorial, referring to action in the Vietnam war.

"The Christmas of the president's impeachment and the Iraq bombings are set to go down in history as a stain — and one that grows bigger by the day," it said.

Europe offered Clinton enormous support at the start of the Lewinsky scandal, but the Iraq offensive has hit a raw nerve on the continent and personal attacks on the U.S. president suddenly seemed more numerous Sunday.

"Let us be frank. [Clinton] is hor-

rible: hypocritical, a liar, immature, irresponsible," commentator Vasco Pulido Valente thundered in Portugal's *Diario de Noticias*.

Some of the few European supporters of the U.S. military action demanded Clinton's resignation, saying he was no longer a credible commander-in-chief.

"The blunt truth is that Mr. Clinton cannot be regarded as a liar by his own people and hope to command respect on the international stage," Britain's Sunday Times said.

By and large, European newspaper appeared to think Clinton should stay on and placed much of the blame for the current crisis on hard-liners in the U.S. Republican Party.

"The United States might well come out of this affair weakened... Clinton has without doubt much sinned. But the responsibility for this mad situation lies above all with the Republican majority in Congress," France's *Le Monde* said.

In a commentary headlined "Bloodsports," the liberal German daily *Die Sueddeutsche Zeitung* commented that the Republicans' pursuit of Clinton "rode roughshod over the will of the voters."

"It is no longer possible to explain the warlike and uncompromising mood in Washington in rational terms," it said.

Britain's Observer newspaper said Clinton should probably remain in office, arguing that resign-

ation would set a dangerous constitutional precedent. However, it conceded that he was politically dead and should go if public opinion deserted him.

"It is a desperate position, a tragedy for the U.S. and the world," the weekly paper commented.

Spain's *El Pais*, in an editorial headlined "Unjust, but deserved," took a similar line, seeing short-term benefits if Clinton quit. "But with his resignation American democracy would be the loser," it warned.

Scandinavian papers, fearful that the U.S. might now become so absorbed by the impeachment that it would ignore foreign affairs, worried whether the world would end

up as a loser.

"What will happen with Taiwan's sensitive relations to China if Beijing sees Washington taking a step away? How will North Korea be handled? How will Middle East peace survive?" the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* asked.

France's *Nouvel Observateur* thought instead that the impeachment and Iraq had taught the world a lesson.

"There is a feeling of decadence in the air, of something ending. The end of an illusion born amidst the rubble of the Berlin Wall — that of a world where America would be the example of modern democracy and the guarantor of right. It is neither one nor the other," it wrote.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Cartoon — Batman
15:30 Children drama — David Copper Field
16:00 Des Chiffres Et Des Lettres
16:30 Ch. 2 links with Ch. 1
17:00 Thalassa
18:15 Omar Ben Abdul Aziz
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Words of Wisdom
19:30 News headlines
19:33 The Parenthood
20:00 Doc. — Islamic Heritage and Art
20:30 Drama — Big Sky
21:30 Encounter
22:00 News in English
22:30 Drama — The Fix
23:30 Comedy — Perfect Stranger
23:59 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

05:04 Fair
06:27 (Sunrise) Doha
11:34 Dhruv
14:18 Asr
16:40 Maghreb
18:03 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle Church Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Relative cold weather conditions

will prevail, skies partly cloudy, scattered showers expected in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom, and winds southerly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be moderate, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman.....06/14
Aqaba.....10/20
Deserts.....04/16
Jordan Valley.....11/21

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 13 Aqaba 19 Humidity readings: Amman 59 per cent, Aqaba 50 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:
Ajloun.....04/10
Jerash.....05/15
Um Qays.....05/15
Madaba.....04/14
Petra.....04/14
Dead Sea.....12/22

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Munther Al Khatib.....5160868
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyem.....4620115
Dr. Wisam Hazzayim.....4748563
Dr. Mukhlis Muzalrah.....5150312

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy.....5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy.....4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy.....5537004
Ruksa Al Dawa Pharmacy.....5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Issam Salih.....(02)246858
Fou'ad Pharmacy.....(02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Ziyad Jghaitum.....(09)992991
Palestine Pharmacy.....(09)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre.....4637111
Civil Defence Department.....5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue.....4630341
Civil Defence Emergency.....199
Rescue Police 192 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade.....4617101
Blood Bank.....4775121
Highway Police.....5343402
Traffic Police.....4896390
Public Security Dept.....4630321
Hotel Complaints.....5605800
Price Complaints.....5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints.....4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance).....121
Overseas Calls.....0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery.....5921199
The Islamic, Abdi.....5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre.....586856
Luzmila.....4630195
Khaldit Maternity.....4642816
Akileh Maternity.....4642412
Jabal Amman Maternity.....4642362
Malhas, J. Amman.....4636140
Palestine.....5607071
Shameisani Hospital.....5607431
Jordan Hospital.....5607550
University Hospital.....5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital.....56672719
Al-Ahli, Abdi.....56641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen.....477101/3
Al-Bashir.....4775111/26
Army, Marka.....4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital.....5157100
Amal Hospital.....5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre.....5353000

FOR THE TRAVELLER

International Airport
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (53700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15Sanaa (RJ)
08:30Dhahran (RJ)
09:30Jeddah (RJ)
10:30Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:00New Delhi (RJ)
12:05Kuwait (RJ)
12:30Cairo (RJ)
16:25London (RJ)
16:45New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:05Kuwait (RJ)
18:35Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
20:30Bangkok, Sharjah (RJ)
01:15Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
03:00Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30Beirut (RJ)
10:30Frankfurt, London (RJ)
11:00Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:05Kuwait (RJ)
12:30Cairo (RJ)
20:15Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:45Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:15Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
21:20Dammam (RJ)
22:00Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
22:00Tehran (RJ)
22:45Sanaa (RJ)
02:15Bangkok (add) (RJ)

(RW)

Other Flights

08:20Alexandria (BA)
09:30Cairo (MS)
10:00Khartoum (SD)
13:20Bahrain (GF)
14:45Doha (QR)
15:05Vienna (OS)
15:25Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)
17:50Istanbul (SD)
18:40Beirut (ME)
19:15Frankfurt (LH)
22:25Tel Aviv (LY)
01:25Amsterdam (KL)
01:25Athens (OA)

Other Flights

06:00Istanbul (TK)
07:25Paris (AF)
09:05London (BA)
10:30Cairo (MS)
11:05Istanbul (SD)
14:10Bahrain (GF)
15:30Vienna (OS)
15:35Doha (QR)
16:30Dubai (EK)
18:50Khartoum (SD)
20:06Beirut (ME)
23:10Tel Aviv (LY)
02:25Amsterdam (KL)
02:45Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)

07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
22:00 Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)

NEWS

Occupied Jerusalem

Police are checking possible links between the Israeli who was wounded this morning in an explosion... and the stabbings, the radio said.

The stabbings began in late 1997 in Mea Shearim, the heart of ultra-Orthodox Jewish life in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem blast may be linked to stabbings — radio

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Police were investigating Sunday whether an Israeli held in connection with a blast in Jerusalem was involved in the stabbing of seven Arabs, Israel's Army Radio said.

Police said they arrested a Jewish man overnight who was lightly wounded in an explosion near Jerusalem's Old City. The radio said the suspect may have been planning a bomb against Arabs when it blew up prematurely.

A Jerusalem judge issued a gag order on details of the case. A police spokesman said the man, wounded in the hand, was being held along with three companions.

Use of force only complicated solution to Iraq crisis, Yeltsin says

MOSCOW (AP) — President Boris Yeltsin said Sunday that the U.S.-British air strikes had only complicated any solution to the Iraqi crisis, and welcomed the end to the bombardment.

"Reason has finally prevailed," he said in a statement transmitted by Russian news agencies. "Now the international community should draw serious conclusions from these tragic events."

The United States and Britain halted air strikes against Iraq on Saturday after four days of attacks,

saying their forces had inflicted "significant damage" on Iraq's military.

"It still remains to fully assess the negative political consequences the bombardment led to, not to speak of the victims among the civilian population and the significant damage to the Iraqi economy, which was already dried by the sanctions," Yeltsin was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency.

"However, now it is absolutely clear that the use of force only complicated the solution of the Iraqi problem."

Yeltsin said that Russia insisted on the creation of a multipolar system in the world and the strengthening of the United Nations' role.

"This is the universal organisation that is charged with guaranteeing collective responses to the new, dangerous challenges confronted by the family of nations. Nobody has the right to violate the U.N. Charter, which for more than half a century has been the reliable guarantee of peace and stability," he said.

Yeltsin called on Iraq to fulfil the U.N. resolutions that would allow the lifting of sanctions. However, he said that the world must not neglect Iraq's humanitarian needs, saying that "now like never before" the Iraqis needed massive food and medical aid.

The Iraq crisis has underlined Moscow's loss of global influence and the unhappiness of some Russian political leaders and officials about close post-Soviet ties with the West. Part of Yeltsin's anger stemmed from his not being informed in advance about the air strikes.



WOMEN PROTEST AGAINST STRIKES ON IRAQ: Representatives of women's organisations Sunday stage a protest in front of the U.N. headquarters in Amman. They delivered a message to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan demanding practical action to help the people and children of Iraq by lifting the sanctions imposed after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 (Petra photo)

Aqaba palm tree plantation aims at improving residents' living conditions

By Dana Charkasi

AMMAN — Down in Aqaba a group of people are being trained how to plant and care for palm trees, to process dates and produce goods from palm leaves.

The palm forest plantation project was introduced by the Aqaba Region Authority in 1985, and in 1992 the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) took over sponsorship of the scheme.

As part of the Agricultural Projects Unit, the Arab Palm Forest Plantation is one of several agricultural projects run by the QAF in order to improve quality of life of underprivileged people on the one hand and the environment on the other.

The aim is not profit, but to inform people of ways and means of improving their income.

The plantation in Aqaba organises courses for people

in Wadi Araba so that they can learn the skills of correctly planting and taking care of the palm trees and thus encourage them to start their own projects.

"This year we conducted 10 courses for 30 farmers. There is a great interest, people want to learn this [skill] as they are already planting, but they are not doing it in the correct way," said Jamil Mohammad, project manager at the QAF plantation.

Another aim, he said, is to teach women to produce by-products of dates such as date syrup, ajwa (dried date paste), and vinegar, and to teach them how to correctly clean, pack and store dates.

In addition, emphasis is being put on teaching women the skills to produce goods such as tables, chairs and other household items from the palm leaves. At the end of each course, the women sell their goods on

the local market.

The plantation is located on 1,500 dunums, of which 650 are already planted with palm trees.

"This year we have produced 50 tonnes of dates," said Hamdullah Akram, the responsible engineer for the Aqaba plantation. He said he expected that the production will double within the coming two years.

Next year, a further 200 dunums are expected to be planted with an additional 2,000 palm tree saplings. After the whole 1,500 dunums are planted and after the palm trees reach production age after five to six years, the plantation is expected to produce up to 300 tonnes of dates per year.

"In the future, when we have higher production, we plan to have specialists help us with maintaining quality and packing, as we have to be able to compete in the market," Mohammad added.

The QAF supports the plantation each year with JD150,000-200,000 in order to purchase palm tree saplings and equipment, particularly irrigation equipment such as pumps and drip pipes, and to pay salaries and administrative costs.

Besides the social factor of improving the quality of life of local residents, the project also offers an environmental plus.

"By planting palm trees, we prevent the soil from eroding," Mohammad told the Jordan Times.

"Much soil in the Jordan Valley has become salty due to use of fertilisers. A cheap method of desalinating soil is by planting palm trees, as they have the ability to extract the salt from the soil. It also brings the farmer additional long-term income through the harvesting of dates."

House condemns U.S.-British 'aggression,' demands action to end sanctions on Iraq

AMMAN (Petra) — Lower House of Parliament Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali on Sunday led deputies in condemning the U.S.-British strikes against Iraq and demanding that Arab states rally behind Iraq and end the sanctions on the country.

One deputy after another took to the podium to voice their condemnation of the attacks that killed innocent civilians and demanded that Arab parliaments force their respective governments to take a joint stand against Washington and London and work in unison towards ending the sanctions on Iraq as well as Libya and Sudan.

Noting that the strikes against Iraq followed eight years of sanctions that crippled the Arab state, Majali said there is urgent need for the deputies and their counterparts in the Arab World to express the Arab people's stand and work towards ending the Iraqi people's suffering.

Deputy Abdul Karim Dughmi said the sanctions imposed on Iraq in 1990 for its occupation of Kuwait should end because their

continuation is unjustified since Iraq has complied with all U.N. resolutions.

Describing the U.S. and British strikes on Iraq as a barbaric action, Dughmi said that while aggression is being directed against Iraq, the two powers are condoning and encouraging Israel to defy the world community, disregard U.N. resolutions and help the Jewish state build up its arsenal of all types of mass destruction weapons.

Accusing the U.S. and Britain of carrying out a plot to destroy the Arab World and imposing their hegemony on the Arab Nation with the help of Israel, Dughmi demanded that the parliaments of Arab countries be urged to force their governments to end the sanctions on Iraq.

Echoing Dughmi's statement, Deputy Salameh Hiyari accused the U.S. and Britain of launching the attacks as a service to Israel. He said Arab and Islamic parliaments should immediately take a decision to end the sanctions.

Deputy Ra'd Bakri accused the U.S., which he said boasts of a commit-

ment to human rights and combating terrorism, of perpetrating the worst type of terrorism through killing Iraqi children and acting in defiance of the world community's opinion. Bakri said the Arab countries should take a courageous step to terminate the embargo on Iraq.

Deputy Mukhlis Zawahreh said the Jordanian people condemn the U.S.-British aggression as a barbaric act against the Iraqi people, who have never spared any efforts in helping their Arab brothers in times of need and in the face of external aggression.

Deputies Abdul Majid Aqtash, Nashaat Hamameh, Hamoud Khalileh, Abdullah Zureiqat and others accused the U.S. and Britain of condoning Israel's disregard of U.N. resolutions and of acting as the world's police in the so-called "new world order."

Deputy Khalil Attieh demanded that the government undertake a diplomatic offensive to have the sanctions lifted and to organise relief assistance to the Iraqi people.

Khalil also demanded that

the government send volunteers, medical groups and relief supplies to Iraq.

Deputy Kamel Omari criticised the Arab countries for their "passive attitude" towards the aggression and for helping the U.S. perpetuate its embargo on the Iraqi people.

Deputy Usama Milkawi said the strikes on Iraq represent flagrant aggression against all Arab countries and expose the barbaric nature of the U.S. and Britain.

This aggression, he said, requires not only mere words of condemnation but rather a practical reply to make the aggressors realise that they cannot escape retribution.

Deputy Riad Saraineh said the attacks exposed the treachery of some of Arab states which, he said, supported the enemy of the Arab World.

Deputy Mohammad Abu Hdeib said U.S. President Bill Clinton replied to the enthusiastic and very warm welcome accorded him during his visit to the Palestinian territories by launching a barbaric strike against the children of Iraq.

Viagra expected to be sold soon following Health Ministry's approval

By Munther Murjan

AMMAN — The controversial impotency drug Viagra will soon be sold in Jordanian pharmacies following the Health Ministry's approval of the drug's registration, an official said Sunday.

The drug, which has become the talk of the town, has been selling illegally in Jordan for months at inflated prices.

"Viagra has been registered with us," said the Health Ministry official.

"But the actual sale in pharmacies will start after the local agent submits the rest of the required papers to the ministry's technical committee."

He and others refused to give further details. But local newspapers on Sunday reported that the drug would only be sold with a medical prescription.

Mohammad Sabbagh, general manager of Sabagh Drug Company, the local agent of Pfizer, the American manufacturer of Viagra, said his company

had submitted a request to register the drug in Jordan six months ago.

He said Viagra will be sold in a four-pill pack at the cost of JD36.

"The selling price in Jordan is the same as international prices," added Sabbagh.

The head of the Jordan Medical Association, Bassem Dajani, said he welcomed the legal sale of Viagra in Jordan, one year after it was introduced in the United States and in many other Western coun-

tries. "If the drug is used under the supervision of a doctor, I see no harm in encouraging its use," Dajani told the Jordan Times.

In a country where the population grows annually by 3.4 per cent, one of the highest in the world, many officials fear authorising Viagra in Jordan could further swell the population and place a greater strain on the already-stretched economy and public services.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Vocational training workshop opens

AMMAN (Petra) — The Vocational Training Corporation in conjunction with the United Nations Development Fund Sunday started a two-week workshop to help raise the efficiency of directors of Sudanese vocational centres through providing them with latest training techniques. The seminar is part of the corporation's plans to boost cooperation and coordination with Arab countries, said VTC Director General Ali Nasrallah.

Fines issued for food violations

AMMAN (Petra) — Amman's Industry and Trade Department Sunday said it issued fines for 73 violations of regulations concerning foodstuffs on the first day of Ramadan. Department Director Mahmoud Abu Hazim said several items from stores were seized for not having the prices displayed or for expired dates.

Food subsidies announced

AMMAN (Petra) — Finance Minister Michel Marto on Sunday said the government on Jan. 2 will begin providing JD2 per family as the last instalments of cash subsidies for wheat, rice, sugar and milk. Marto added that the subsidies, which will continue to be distributed until Feb. 11, can be obtained from post offices and accredited banks.

What's going on

THE NIGHTS OF RAMADAN FESTIVAL

* French film "En avoir (ou pas)" (sponsored by the French Cultural Centre) at Cinema Philadelphia at 8:00 p.m.
* French film "L'Age des possibles" (sponsored by the French Cultural Centre) at Cinema Philadelphia on Thursday Dec. 22 at 8:00 p.m.

* "The Bostonians" at the British Council, Jabal Amman on Tuesday Dec. 22 at 6:00 p.m. (Also screening children's film "Toy Box 2" on Wednesday Dec. 23 at 5:00 p.m.).

* Exhibition of ceramics, sculpture, and abstract (plastic) art by Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Sudanese artists at Hammourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5336096), until Jan. 25.

* Exhibition of Nabataean silver jewelry at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Sagra Street, until Dec. 31 (Tel. 5699141/2).

* "The Warm Winter" — works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1.

* The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darar Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until Jan. 28.



RAMADAN SWEETS: Restaurant workers prepare qatayef, a popular sweet during the Holy Month of Ramadan, in Amman on the first day of the month. Pious Muslims refrain from drinking, eating and smoking during daylight hours of the month, which ends with a three-day long feast (AFP photo)

Ministry continues plans to merge municipalities

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment is implementing plans to merge a number of the country's municipalities to ensure better and more effective public services, a senior official said Sunday.

Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreishan said plans have been made to reduce the existing 323 municipal councils into 170 by July 1999, when municipal elections are

scheduled to be held.

The country's municipalities are indebted by approximately JD80 million to government and local banks and are not in a position to finance and execute development projects, Kreishan said.

The government hopes that the mergers will help the new municipalities handle problems in general and indebtedness in particular more efficiently, the minister added.

The envisioned municipal councils will be able to secure revenues

through a better system of fee collection, overcome issues connected with town planning and infrastructure, appoint more efficient municipal councils and cut expenditures, according to Kreishan.

He said the mergers will promote the work of local governments, modernise the councils' systems and allow them to carry out joint income-generating projects to help pay back their huge debts.

The Greater Amman Municipality, which was merged with smaller

outlying municipalities, is a good example of the benefits of merging small municipal councils into larger entities, noted Kreishan.

He pointed out that larger municipalities can plan projects in a more comprehensive manner than their smaller counterparts.

The mergers will not result in layoffs, according to Kreishan, who said municipal employees will undergo a period of training and rehabilitation to make them more efficient.

Charges dropped against surgeon accused of negligence

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Amman criminal prosecutor has decided not to prosecute a surgeon working for the government who was accused of causing the death of a 75-year-old woman while operating on her in his home in Jabal Nasser last October.

The doctor was removing a lump from a breast of the woman, Yusra M.'s breast, but she died during surgery, medical sources said following the incident. The physician turned himself in to police, they added.

The prosecution's decision came following the testimony of pathologist Hani Jahshan, who testified in front of the prosecution that the woman did not die as a result of the operation, but rather "because she was suffering from long-term heart problems."

"There is no direct or indirect relation between the surgical performance and the death of the woman," pathologist Jahshan testified in his report.

The woman was given an injection of local anaesthesia before being operated on.

Shortly after the operation, the woman became very tired and was rushed to a nearby hospital, where she was declared dead on arrival.

Riots grip Cambodian town over alleged toxic waste

SIHANOUKVILLE, Cambodia (AFP) — Hundreds of angry demonstrators protesting the dumping of alleged Taiwanese toxic waste close to this Cambodian coastal resort went on a rampage Sunday, leaving at least one man injured.

Nearly 500 protesters attacked the local sea port office, the home of the governor and a luxury hotel in protest against corrupt officials who let the waste in, amid fears the consignment has claimed two lives.

"We had tried to explain to them many times since yesterday that the government will take this toxic waste back to Taiwan but they do not listen," Ouk Oeun, local deputy military police chief, told AFP.

After setting fire to and smashing a port office, the mob turned their attention to destroying a sea-front hotel, an AFP correspondent saw.

Mattresses, fridges and generators were burned, while one demonstrator was rushed to hospital when a television thrown from a third floor window hit him on the head.

Police fired massive volleys of automatic gunfire in the air to disperse the swelling crowd when they torched the luxury Toyota Landcruiser of the local governor, and then smashed and burned down his house.

Earlier appeals by local police over loudspeakers — detailing government pledges to take the waste back to Taiwan — had little effect, while water cannons were too occupied with the raging fires to dampen the anger of the mob.

"I feel very sad that these youths do not understand the value of our national assets. They are right but they should not use violence," Ouk Oeun said.

He said the rampage ended after four hours but no arrests were made. Tight police presence throughout the afternoon prevented the outbreak of any further violence as rioters were kept away from government buildings.

Meanwhile senior government officials — including Environment Minister Mok Mareth, Finance Minister Keat Chhon, army chief of staff General Ke Kim Yan, and deputy premier Sar Kheng — arrived

here to decide how to solve the crisis. Government officials here say the 3,000 metric tonnes of waste — described in documents as "construction waste" — contains massive quantities of mercury and is in fact compressed ashes from an industrial incinerator.

However the Taipei-based Formosa Plastics, behind the shipment of the waste, assert it only contains low-levels of mercury and dismiss fears that the deaths of two people are linked to their contact with the rubble.

Alarm bells sounded here when local scavengers suffered skin rashes after sifting through the rubble, some of which is reported to bear the skull and crossbones symbol and marked "deadly."

Part of a government plan to contain the waste was also set in motion Sunday, with bulldozers piling up earth around the site — situated 14 kilometres north of Sihanoukville — in a bid to stop mercury filtering into local water supplies.

While defence ministry chemical inspectors carried out further tests, many local workers were unhappy to be involved in the task.

"I am very afraid because one of my workers has died already," said Man Men, chief engineer at Sihanoukville sea port.

"I don't know whether he died because of the chemicals, but one day he was working with it and the next day he was dead."

Cambodian Premier Hun Sen vowed urgent action Saturday, promising to pack the waste and use the country's tiny navy to ship it back to Taiwan.

He also entered a diplomatic quarantine, when he asserted that because he viewed Taiwan as a "province of China," he had requested through Beijing to send the waste back. The Chinese immediately agreed, he said.

China views Taiwan as a renegade province since the defeated Nationalist government fled there in 1949 after Communists won a bitter civil war.

Officials say investigations point towards high level corruption, and the strongman vowed to dismiss those responsible for allowing the consignment into Cambodia.



Rebel Shan State Army (SSA) commander Colonel Yod Suk speaks to Reuters during an interview held in a jungle hideout of the Shan state in north eastern Myanmar. Colonel Yod Suk said oppression by the Myanmar military of the northeastern state's native population has caused the boom in the local opium and heroin trade. Shan rebels had no permanent land because of frequent attacks by the Myanmar military against the SSA and its follower as they fought for their own homeland and autonomy. The SSA claims to control about 40 per cent of Shan state and is one of a handful of armed rebel groups that have no signed ceasefire pacts with the Yangon government (Reuters photo)

Myanmar's armed ethnic groups unite to counter government offensive

BANGKOK (AP) — With Myanmar's military mustering troops for a major offensive, some of its ethnic rebel opponents have formed an alliance and are attempting to forge closer ties with Thailand's military.

Shan and Karenni rebels said this weekend they had joined forces to fight against the imminent offensive by the Myanmar army. They also said they would appeal to the Thai army to work with them to staunch the flow of narcotics along the Thai-Myanmar border.

Thailand's Foreign Ministry gave qualified support to that proposal Sunday. "Thailand is willing to work with all concerned parties to combat drug trafficking, but without undermining the national integrity of the state of Myanmar," said Kobsak Chutikul, the Thai ministry spokesman.

"This doesn't mean that we will give recognition or assistance to them in their internal struggle against the Yangon government," Kobsak said.

Thai army generals confirmed this week that Myanmar's military was mobilising to attack several rebel guerrilla groups based near the Thai border. The groups, including ethnic Shan, Karenni, Wa and Karen forces have been fighting for autonomy from the government in Yangon for as long as 50 years.

For decades, Thailand supported the rebels as a buffer between them and their traditional enemy Myanmar, also known as Burma. But as relations improved with Yangon, Thailand has reduced support for the rebels, who have since suffered a series of crippling defeats at the hands of Myanmar's army.

Some of the rebel groups, particularly the Shan and Wa, have funded their insurgencies by trafficking in opium, the raw material for heroin.

Myanmar is the world's largest producer of the deadly drug.

The Shan State Army, the rebels who announced the alliance this weekend, are remnants of the army once commanded by opium warlord Khun Sa, who surrendered to Myanmar's military government in 1996 and now lives in Yangon.

Their commander, Yord Serk, said the alliance will mean they have 20,000 troops in the field. That figure could not be independently confirmed, however.

Although Myanmar's military government is considered a pariah by many Western countries because of its rampant human rights violations, support for the rebels has been tepid because of their drug trafficking.

In attempt to make them-

selves more palatable to the international community, Yord Serk said his troops have now shunned drug trafficking and would fight against it.

"SSA is employing more than just military means to achieve our objective. We are looking at political means as well," he said.

The Karenni National Progressive Party signed a ceasefire agreement with Myanmar's military in 1996, but it quickly broke down in disputes over controlling revenue from timber exports to Thailand.

The Shan and Karenni people and their armies live and operate in different provinces in Myanmar, so their alliance may prove to be more symbolic than practical in terms of battlefield efficiency.

Myanmar's ethnic groups also have a history of fighting among each other, leading to the withering of several alliances in the past.

He faces another corruption charge and five charges of sodomy, carrying maximum penalties of up to 20 years jail.

Complaining of limited access to his lawyers, Anwar is appealing a high court ruling rejecting his application for bail. Last Saturday, the court of appeal said a decision was expected within one to two weeks.

"During the holy month of Ramadan, we appeal to the government to allow him to come home," she told reporters Saturday. "He should come home to be with us."

Anwar, fired on Sept. 2 and arrested 18 days later after leading a huge protest in the capital, is on trial on four corruption charges related to allegations that he used his position to cover up

claims of sexual misconduct.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Time magazine names Clinton, Starr men of the year

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Time magazine named President Bill Clinton and his nemesis, independent counsel Kenneth Starr, as its men of the year in its edition out this week. The cover shows a determined looking Clinton casting a shadow over a bespectacled Starr, the man whose investigation into a series of minor scandals inexorably led to Saturday's impeachment vote. A survey released by the magazine found that while 68 per cent of those surveyed believed that Clinton had acted irresponsibly, a solid 59 per cent viewed the president favourably. But voters were split on whether the Starr investigation had diminished Clinton's effectiveness as president. Forty-nine per cent agreed and exactly the same number of 49 per cent disagreed. In contrast, just 30 per cent viewed Starr favourably while 57 per cent viewed him unfavourably. First Lady Hillary Clinton was more popular than either of the men, with a 65 per cent favourability rating. Twenty-five per cent viewed the president's wife unfavourably. And fully 74 per cent agreed when asked if "political events in Washington are out of control." Twenty-four per cent disagreed.

Pakistan, India expel embassy officials on spying charges

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Uneasy neighbours. Pakistan and India, levelled spying charges and expelled each other's embassy officials, the Pakistani authorities said Sunday. One embassy official has been expelled from each side, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Tariq Altaf. The Indians expelled a junior official at the Pakistan Embassy in New Delhi Friday and Pakistan reciprocated by expelling a similar ranking official at the Indian Embassy in Pakistan. Relations between Pakistan and India, the two newest nuclear powers, are tense over a dispute over the remote Himalayan region of Kashmir, which is divided between them. Both countries lay claim to a united Kashmir. The flash point of two wars since 1947 and independence from Britain. Kashmir is the only Muslim majority state in the Hindu-dominated India. India accuses Pakistan of arming Muslim militants who are fighting for either outright independence for Kashmir or merger with Pakistan. Islamabad denies the charge and says it gives only diplomatic and political support to the Kashmiri separatists.

Nepalese Prime Minister Koirala says to resign

KATHMANDU (R) — Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala said Sunday he would resign as part of a plan to form a new coalition with other parties in preparation for upcoming parliamentary elections in the Himalayan kingdom. "I will resign," Koirala told reporters after a meeting of his parties' central working committee. He has headed a minority government since April this year.

China needs law on social security, leading capitalist says

BEIJING (AP) — China has begun considering a law to compel the growing private sector to pay into a new Western-style social welfare system, the official China Daily reported Sunday. A law under consideration would require all firms, whether state or private, to pay into a nascent national social security system, Jing Shuping, head of a government-backed group that represents the private sector, was quoted by the paper as saying. He added that without the private sector's participation, the social security system would fail. Without nationwide unemployment and pension schemes, the government fears expected layoffs of tens of millions of unneeded state workers could create social unrest. So it views a social security safety net as an essential part of reforms to end central planning and privatise state-run industries. But the report quoted an unnamed expert as saying that while 90 per cent of state firms are paying into the social insurance pools, only a minority of private ones are doing so. By last year, the industrial output of private enterprises had jumped to 75 per cent of China's total from just 22 per cent in 1978, the first year of major free market-style economic reforms.

Mobile phone saves Malaysian family from drowning in rough seas

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — A Malaysian man was able to save himself and three relatives from drowning after their fishing boat capsized in rough seas by calling police on a mobile phone, a report said Sunday. Ong Peng Hong, 36, who had wrapped his portable handheld phone in plastic, was able to contact police as he clung to the capsized boat about one nautical mile from shore, state-run Bernama news agency reported. Police immediately dispatched a crew to rescue the man, his two young sons and his brother, from waters off the southern western state of Malacca, the report said.

Six policemen among 10 killed by India blast

GUWAHATI (R) — At least 10 people, including six policemen, were killed in a bomb blast in India's troubled northeastern state of Assam Sunday, police said. "A remote control device went off under a police vehicle in Raniganj in Dhubri district," a police official said. Dhubri borders Bangladesh, and lies 300 km west of Guwahati, Assam's main town. Police said a search party raided a militant hideout Sunday and was returning to the police station along with four it ants when a bomb buried in the road was detonated by remote control. All 10 people in the vehicle died on the spot. Police suspect Bodo militants were responsible for the blast. The Bodos are one of the numerous ethnic groups in the region fighting for a separate state. They accuse the Assam government of depriving them of economic and political opportunities and flooding the region with outsiders.

Malaysian opposition calls for release of Anwar black-eye report

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Malaysian opposition leader Lim Kit Siang called Sunday for the release of a police report into the black eye and other bruises sustained by ousted Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in police custody.

"Today is the full third month of the first detention of Anwar Ibrahim, the day he said he was physically assaulted by

police when in custody in Bukit Aman until he lost consciousness," he said in a statement.

Lim, who heads the Democratic Action Party and is also opposition leader in the federal parliament, said the delay in releasing the report was "another national and international scandal" for Malaysia.

Even though it was submitted to his office a month ago, Lim noted

that Attorney-General Mohar Abdullah was "still sitting on the report of the independent police investigation team into the outrageous incident ... showing no sense of urgency or seriousness in the case."

Lim recalled that Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad had said the government would not allow the alleged assault to be covered up.

"If this is the case, he

should direct the immediate publication of the police findings on the three-month old Anwar black eye — and demand a public explanation from the attorney general (for) the inordinate delay," he said.

Lim also voiced support for an appeal by Anwar's wife Azizah for her husband to be released on bail for the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which started Sunday.

Ever-popular first lady Hillary deployed to rescue Clinton

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The ever-popular Hillary Clinton came out fighting for her husband's political survival this week, capping the most tumultuous 12 months of any first lady.

The bitter irony that it was President Bill Clinton's adulterous affair that led to the crisis is nothing new.

As humiliating details of the president's sex with a young intern emerged, Hillary Clinton's approval ratings soared; Vogue put her on its coveted cover and she gained political status at home and abroad.

Physically she looks better at 51 than she did at 31,

when she wore thick glasses, a no-nonsense hairstyle and the drab garb of an Arkansas lawyer.

Thanks to her young French hairdresser, Clinton's layered, swept-back hairdo is now all the rage and she is impeccably dressed by the likes of Oscar de la Renta.

"Historians will long ponder how Mrs. Clinton came in as Eleanor Roosevelt and left as Madonna," writes the caustic New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd.

And politically she is more powerful than ever. The first lady was the biggest draw on the cam-

paign circuit in the 1998 midterm elections when she raked in millions of dollars for her Democratic party.

She has also become an influential voice in the third world. This year alone she made five extensive trips to campaign for women's rights abroad where she was greeted like a Hollywood star.

Wags suggest the first lady prefers distant shores as sordid details of her husband's flagrant infidelity are plastered over the front pages back home.

But even in her darkest hour, she has maintained an unflappable public face.

Saturday, as the House of Representatives cast an historic vote to impeach Clinton for lying about his affair with Monica Lewinsky, the first lady made an extraordinary trip to the Capitol to lobby undecided lawmakers.

And Friday she sought to inject a note of calm into the crisis.

"It is a time for reflection and reconciliation," Clinton said, noting the confluence of Christmas, Hanukkah and Ramadan. "We in our country ought to practice reconciliation and we ought to bring our country together and end divisiveness."

Heading to a children's hospital with her cat Socks, Hillary told reporters on the White House driveway that "the vast majority of Americans share my approval and pride in the job my husband is doing."

On the face of it, her personal transformation may surprise some, but Washington Post society writer Roxanne Roberts said there was no mystery.

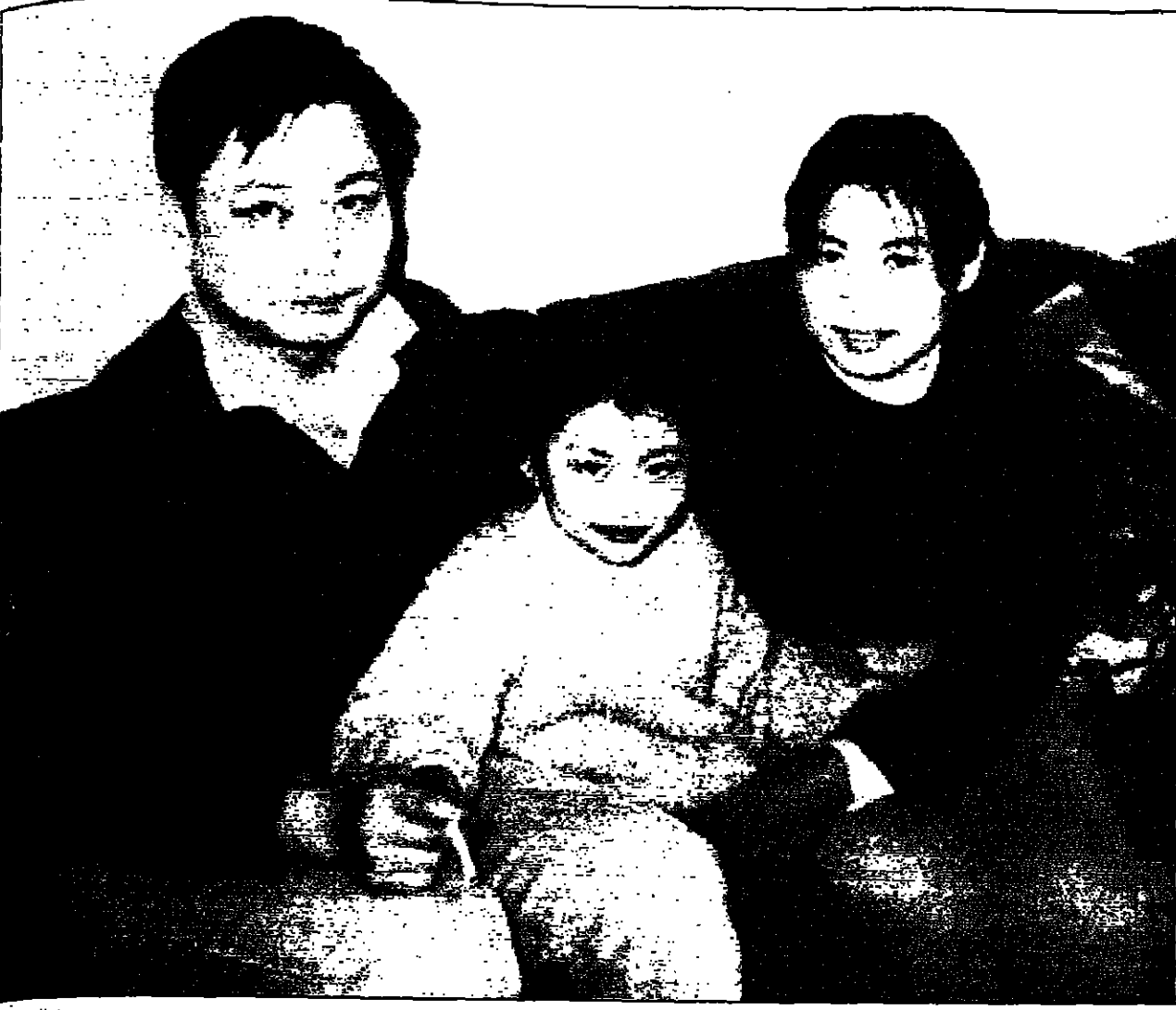
"It seems perfectly reasonable to me. If your life appears to be falling apart you don't want to look like you're falling apart," she said.

"Events have spiralled so phenomenally around her

that there isn't an awful lot that she can control except who she is," she said. "Conventional wisdom is that Hillary Clinton is not a woman who would let anyone see her beaten or bedraggled."

Not so her husband. The president's once-brown hair has turned a snowy white in his six years in office and the latest events have etched deeper lines in his face.

"What is really remarkable is that you can see the strain on the president's face and bearing but you don't see any of it on hers," Roberts said.



Chinese labour activist Liu Nianchun, seen in this undated file photo with his family in Beijing before he was incarcerated, was freed on medical parole and forced into exile in the United States with his family Dec. 20 in an apparent move to deflect international criticism on the eve of a new dissident trial. Leading Chinese dissident Xu Wenli, is scheduled to stand trial Monday for trying to set up the Chinese Democratic Party. He is expected to plead not guilty to charges of subversion (Reuters photo)

China sends jailed dissident into exile ahead of other's trial

BEIJING (AP) — China released a respected, but ailing labour rights campaigner from a prison work camp Sunday and immediately sent him into exile in the United States.

Releasing Liu Nianchun appeared to be an attempt by the government to blunt international criticism over Monday's upcoming trial of prominent dissident Xu Wenli.

Xu is the third leading member of a would-be opposition political party put on trial for subversion in a three-week crackdown that has seen 30 dissidents arrested or interrogated.

Although pleased that Liu Nianchun was free, human rights groups decried the Chinese government's timing as manipulative.

"We don't want to give any credit to the Chinese government for this cynical game it is playing," said Xiao Qiang, director of New York-based Human Rights in China.

After 3 1/2 years in prison, Liu was taken from the Tuanhe labour camp on the outskirts of Beijing, driven to the capital's airport

and put on a Canadian Air flight, ultimately bound for New York, his mother and brother said.

Accompanying Liu into exile was his wife, Chu Hailan, and their 11-year-old daughter, the family said.

Liu Nianchun's release follows the same pattern China used in freeing its two most famous dissidents, Wei Jingsheng in Nov.

1997 and Wang Dan in April. Authorities released Liu on medical parole, exactly five months before the end of his prison term, provided he go into exile, Liu Qing said.

Liu Nianchun, 50, has been in ill-health for at least two years. In an exam authorities finally agreed to provide last month, doctors discovered Liu had tumours in his mouth, stomach and bowels, Liu Qing said.

Like Wang and Wei, the United States and other Western governments have lobbied China to release Liu. Chinese leaders have been forcing well-known

dissidents into exile throughout the 1990s, finding that once abroad they lose their influence among dissidents at home.

In the only official comment on the release, the Xinhua News Agency reported that judicial departments took into account Liu's health and behaviour in the labour camp in approving his parole for medical treatment.

"I am very happy for Liu Nianchun, but at the same time sending people directly from prison into exile is a type of human rights violation and persecution," Liu Qing said in a telephone interview from his home in New York's Brooklyn borough.

Liu Nianchun was one of the most respected figures in the fractured, persecuted dissident community. His more than 3 1/2 years in prisons and labour camps was a sad illustration of the way China's Communist Party rulers punish people they deem a threat.

Liu was imprisoned three times in the past 17 years.

His last arrest came after he signed a petition calling for labour rights in May 1995. Liu was never put on trial. Fourteen months passed before his wife, Chu Hailan, first learned of his fate and whereabouts: a three-year spell in a labour camp in the frigid, remote northeast.

His term was the maximum police may impose on criminal suspects without trial. Labour camp officials later extended Liu's sentence by a year for trying to escape, a charge Chu claimed was fabricated.

Inside the labour camp, Liu once started a hunger strike to protest his treatment. He was beaten with cattle prods and confined to a room of 2 square metres where he could only sit or stand.

His wife fearlessly endured police harassment, beatings and detentions in campaigning for his release. Chu was dragged away and hit by security forces when she tried to hand a letter to U.N. human rights chief Mary Robinson outside a Beijing hotel in September.

Russia's Primakov off to India for talks on ties into 21st century

MOSCOW (R) — Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov left Moscow for New Delhi Sunday to begin a two-day official visit to India expected to extend bilateral strategic ties into the 21st century, Russian media said.

Government officials were unavailable to confirm his departure on a trip which

had originally been planned for President Boris Yeltsin but which the Kremlin leader had to put off because of poor health.

The aim of the trip was primarily strategic.

"I am convinced that Prime Minister Primakov's visit to India will be an important step in this direction," Yeltsin said last week.

referring to the goal of extending and deepening strategic relations between Moscow and its former cold war ally.

Indian officials have also stressed that it will be the first trip by a government head from a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council since India's atomic weapons tests

this May openly challenged those five states' nuclear arms monopoly.

India and Pakistan, which conducted its own nuclear tests, faced global condemnation and sanctions from the United States, but officials said ties with Russia had endured the fallout.

Since then, Russia and India revived a 10-year-old

deal to build the subcontinent's first big nuclear power station and have finalised a long-term military cooperation agreement that officials said will be signed during the Primakov visit.

The new defence agreement would build on and extend an existing defence cooperation pact to 2010.

About 70 per cent of India's military hardware is of Soviet origin, and has run low on critical spares since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Both sides will also seek to rejuvenate trade ties during Primakov's visit. Bilateral trade totalled \$1.57 billion in 1997/98 (April-March), down sharply from the

Soviet-era figure of about \$5 billion a year.

India is heavily indebted to Russia, mainly for warplanes and other arms supplies, as well as steel products. Confusion over a complicated payment system has slowed trade.

Russian officials said that during the visit by Primakov the two sides would sign

seven documents and perhaps more.

Primakov, a former Foreign Minister and academic orientalist appointed by Yeltsin in September to appease the Communist-led parliament, will meet Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, President K.R. Narayanan and Vice-President Krishna Kant.

Timor protesters arrested in Australia

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Eight people were arrested Sunday after scaling the walls of a defence college near here to protest its use to train Indonesian military and the treatment of East Timorese asylum seekers.

About 300 people gathered at the Fort Queenscliff, south-west of here, opposing the possible deportation of more than 1,600 East Timorese seeking political asylum in Australia, police said.

Sanctuary Network, which organised the action, claims the

government is preparing to deport the Timorese because it classifies them as Portuguese citizens.

"Because the East Timorese do not face persecution in Portugal, the government argues they are not legitimate refugees," spokesman Brendan Condon told reporters.

The Sanctuary Network consists of some 10,000 Australians who have pledged to provide safe houses for East Timorese under threat of deportation.

About 40 demonstrators scrambled up the eight metre

walls of the Queenscliff fort and 10 dropped into its restricted grounds, police said.

Two were escorted out and eight arrested and charged with trespass.

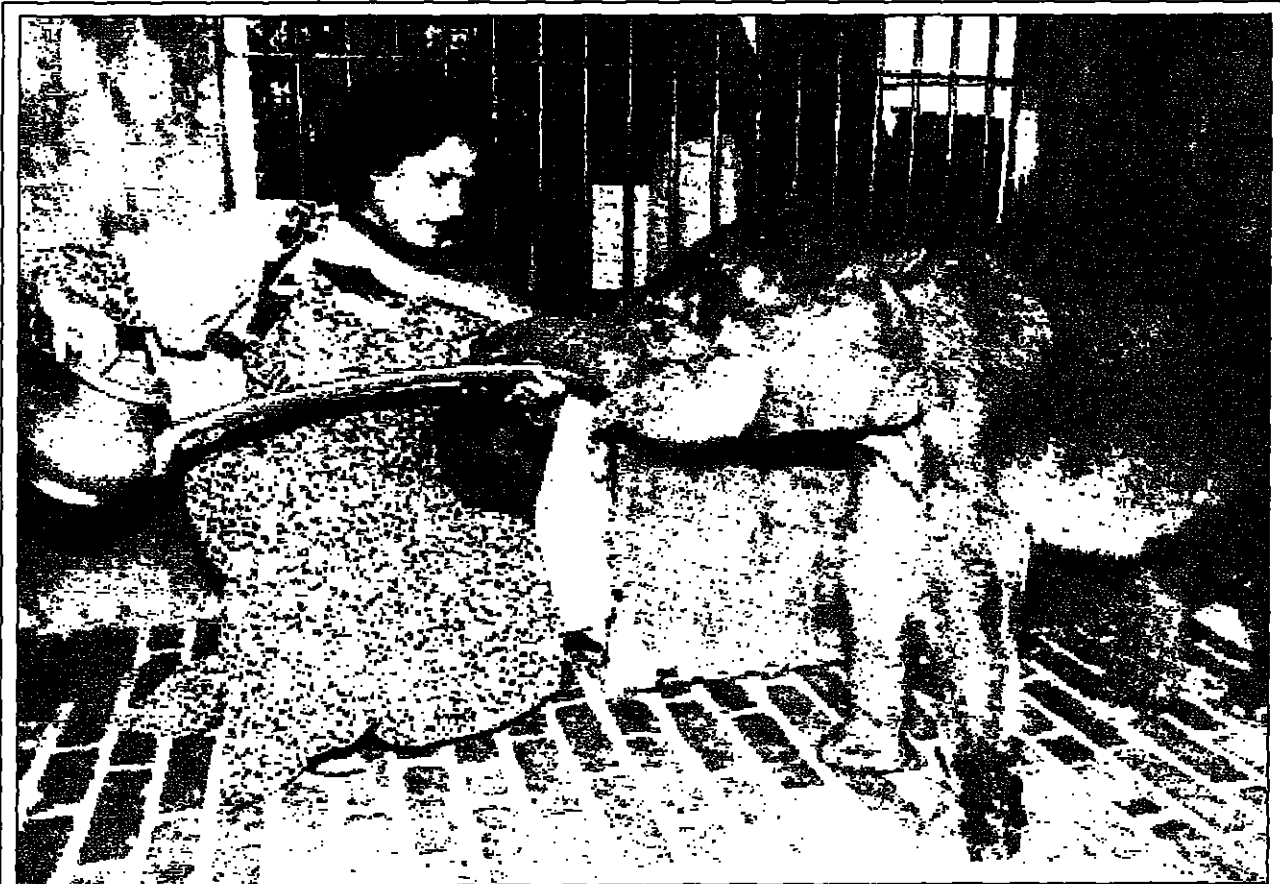
Condon said Fort Queenscliff was targeted because about 500 Indonesian army personnel, "the oppressors of the East Timorese people", had been trained there since 1994.

"If the government makes good its threat of deportation, the Sanctuary Network is committed to civil disobedience," Condon said.

"It will harbour East Timorese asylum seekers, who have been deemed illegal, in safe houses around Australia."

A spokesman for Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock said the Federal Court was still deciding the status of the asylum seekers.

An army officer at the fort admitted Indonesian officers had trained there but did not elaborate. East Timor, a former Portuguese colony, was invaded by Indonesia in 1975 and annexed the following year in a move recognised by Australia, but not the United Nations.



Dr. Nurjahan, a British-trained vet at Bangladesh's Dhaka Zoo, feeds a two-month-old elephant calf named Sultana. Sultana is the first distressed elephant calf plucked from the wild to be raised by the zoo and already she is showing signs of recovery. She was taken to the zoo by forest rangers after she was found abandoned in Bangladesh's southeastern Chittagong Hill Tracts, bordering India and Myanmar in October. Despite government pledges to conserve Bangladesh's dwindling elephant population, a protected law drafted in 1974 remains largely ineffective (Reuters photo)

Russian democrats seek to cement Petersburg gains

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (R) — Voting began Sunday in a second round of local elections in St. Petersburg, where liberals aim to consolidate gains made after a bitter campaign marked by the murder of a prominent Russian democrat.

There were no reports of trouble as people went to the polls in the former tsarist capital a month to the day after Galina Starovoitova was gunned down in a contract killing.

She was a member of parliament and leading supporter of President Boris Yeltsin in the early days of Soviet reforms. Outrage at her murder prompted an unprecedentedly high 40 per cent turnout — some 1.5 million took part — in the first round of the city council election on Dec. 6. The highlight was a strong showing by anti-Communist liberals.

While a bloc backed by

Starovoitova's Democratic Russia party made only a modest showing, the social democrats of Yabloko, led nationally by likely presidential candidate Grigory Yavlinsky, came out as the strongest movement in the city.

The party's local leader was among six candidates elected outright in the first round, capturing more than half the votes.

Among the 88 candidates involved in run-offs for the remaining 44 districts, there were 24 Yabloko members and 22 supporters of Yavlinsky ally Yuri Boldyrev, compared with just 10 Communists. Most of the rest were independents.

Starovoitova's killing prompted some prominent liberals, including two centre-right former prime ministers and former Finance Minister Anatoly Chubais, to bury the differences that have plagued them and begin forming a new

right-wing party.

However, Yavlinsky, who has remained firmly in opposition to Yeltsin in recent years and takes a more centre-left view, has refused to have anything to do with the new bloc, accusing its leaders of responsibility for recent economic failures.

Campaigning for the second round of the St. Petersburg election has been markedly more muted than the first, when the murder of Starovoitova was only the most dramatic event in a battle marked by intimidation, dirty tricks and gang warfare.

Liberals accused many of the candidates of links to mafia-style criminal groups whose activities have turned the second city into the reputed "crime capital" of Russia.

A variety of irregularities, including alleged vote buying and a host of decoy candidates bearing the same or similar names as leading contenders

appearing on ballot papers.

The confirmation of liberal gains in St. Petersburg would be a boost at a time when they are at their lowest ebb since 1991 following the collapse of government finances and the rouble in August. Those events led Yeltsin to sack centre-right Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko and appoint a compromise government under Yevgeny Primakov to appease the Communist-led parliament.

However, St. Petersburg, along with relatively prosperous Moscow, is a traditional stronghold of Russian liberalism and results there may not prove much of a guide to a parliamentary election due late next year or to the 2000 ballot to replace Yeltsin.

Indeed, the latest economic crisis appears to have reinforced opposition to post-Soviet reforms, sparking a surge in extremist authoritarian rhetoric.

Ugandan MPs petition Museveni on allegedly corrupt minister

KAMPALA (AFP) — Some 116 Ugandan members of parliament have petitioned President Yoweri Museveni to take action against a minister they accuse of corruption in the ongoing privatisation process, the state-owned New Vision newspaper reported Sunday.

The paper quoted parliamentary Speaker Francis Ayumu as saying Saturday that MPs had given him a petition against State Minister for Finance Sam

Kutesa, which he would give to Museveni next week.

Ayumu, it said, was waiting to cross-check the signatures on the petition following confusion over a censure motion earlier this year on State Minister for Education, Brigadier Jim Muhwerzi, when some MPs claimed after it had been forwarded to Museveni that they had withdrawn their names from it.

The petition calls on Museveni

to take action against Kutesa on five counts of abuse of office and influence peddling.

The grounds were contained in a controversial 60-page report on the privatisation process tabled in parliament early this month, which claimed that four ministers and one senior official had "derailed" the exercise.

Kutesa was singled out for his role in the divestiture of the lucrative Enebb Air Handling Services from the main bulk of

the state-owned Uganda Airline Corporation.

If Kutesa does not resign, MPs may use article 118 of the constitution against the minister to censure him in a parliamentary vote.

Thursday, Museveni confirmed in a speech read by Vice President Spociuzi Kazibwe that he had accepted the resignation of Mathew Rukikaine, minister of state for privatisation, for his role in the privatisation process.

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The next issue

IF ONE of the results of the four-day bombing of Iraq by U.S. and British forces is indeed the demise of UNSCOM as either no longer necessary after the destruction of Iraq's military capabilities or because Baghdad is no longer politically able to resume cooperation with it, the next issue that awaits determination is the fate of the sanctions regime imposed on Iraq. No one country can on its own afford to break the U.N. Security Council resolution that imposed these sanctions. Not even Russia with its own political and military might can go at it alone despite the recommendation of the Duma to do just that. The neighbouring Arab and Muslim states could be poised to initiate the breaking of the embargoes slammed on Baghdad but they appear to be divided on the Iraqi file. Some Arab capitals even stood behind the attacks and lent support to them, directly or indirectly.

The calls on Jordan to halt its compliance with the Security Council's sanctions resolution by certain well-intentioned political parties and professional associations is simply not a viable option. Besides, Aqaba, the only Jordanian outlet to the sea, is still under surveillance. Our country is neither politically nor economically strong enough to resume open-ended economic ties with Iraq. This leads us to one conclusion and that is to bypass the Security Council's sanction resolution through the U.N. General Assembly.

With both Washington and London enjoying veto power, it is certain that either or both capitals would veto any resolution to lift the sanctions. When the council is divided on an issue of international peace and security, the General Assembly may act under the "United for Peace resolution," which the West improvised in order to bypass Moscow's veto power during the Korean conflict. We believe that Iraq and its supporters should embark on this path instead of trying to break the sanctions resolution on their own. Should the General Assembly be persuaded to call on or even recommend to the member states to stop applying sanctions on the Arab country, then the legitimacy of such an action would be well-grounded.

Iraq has won the sympathy of the international community over the U.S. and British attacks — it was seen as the meek and underdog in a fight that far from fair. By putting up little or no resistance, Baghdad has proved to the world that it has no military capabilities to launch even defensive missiles on attacking planes much less on far away enemies. There was no visible sign that any of the military facilities destroyed emitted any sign that Iraq still has chemical or biological weapons much less nuclear capability. The international stage is indeed set for a real review of the Iraqi file that could very well end up with the lifting of the sanctions.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Raja Issa asked what the U.S. definition is for weapons of mass destruction — the superpower's excuse for attacking Iraq. Do these weapons include Tomahawk and Cruise missiles as well as the Laser-guided bombs, which have caused such 'mass destruction' in Iraq? What about Patriot missiles recently given to Israel by the U.S.? Logically, weapons of mass destruction kill people and destroy buildings as happened in Iraq, said the writer. Are the U.S. and its allies the only parties allowed to use these weapons. Apparently, the U.S. have manipulated the phrase "weapons of mass destruction" by skipping the word "weapons" and retaining "mass destruction." Issa said.

Al Doustour's editorial said the recent U.S.-UK air strikes on Iraq lack international legitimacy and it attacks the U.N. Security Council has become one of the attack's victims. The "U.S.-dominated council" was not consulted when the superpowers decided to destroy Iraq, ignoring all legitimate, ethical and legal standards. The Russian, Chinese and French opposition to the strikes was in defence of their dignity, especially seeing that the chief of weapons inspections Richard Butler's report seems to have been "influenced." It is obvious how dangerous it is putting the world under one power's domination, its arrogance and stubbornness. The newspaper called for a review of the international organisation, pressure to surrender the "Iraqi file" to the Security Council, and reconsideration of the sanctions.

Economic Review

Sports economics: Just Do It!

Dr. Yusuf Mansur

IN THE LAST few weeks Jordanian athletes scored well in regional and Pan-Arab competition. However, Jordan remains a place where dream teams are not assembled and athletic competition does not thrive. The dismal conditions that Jordanian athletic teams and athletes train under, the lack of funding they suffer from, in addition to their terrible living conditions, provide evidence that athletics and economics describing the economics of athletic competition — is not thriving in Jordan.

It is important to underscore that the product of any athlete, or any individual for that matter, is not a function solely of his or her personal characteristics, it depends on the number and quality of other individuals the team or firm has hired. In other words, what each additional player brings to the team is not independent of other inputs being used. Thus, team owners (assuming that athletic teams can be viewed as business entities as in the U.S. and most of the Western hemisphere) who are profit maximisers would hire a star only if the extra revenue

he is expected to generate is greater than his salary. If a team is already loaded with stars, an additional star will not generate much more in additional revenue. On the other hand, if the team has no stars the same athlete would generate a lot of added revenue; poorer quality teams would be willing to bid much more for stars than low quality teams. In other words, highly-talented players would be attracted to Jordan because they would attract very high revenues for the team of their choice. But there is something wrong with the picture because players are constantly attracted away from Jordan. Why? The main reason that talent relocates must be that the additional income generated from the new employment outweighs the discomfort of relocating. In other words, local clubs are not paying them enough to convince them to stay.

In fact, local clubs will never be able to compete for the players unless they up their salaries which they can not because their overall revenues are too shallow to attract even small stars. So the "good ones" leave (or so the club owners or man-

agers think) and a moral hazard problem occurs where clubs start to believe that what has remained behind was not the crème de la crème and offer lower salaries than they used to do.

What is the solution to this vicious circle of low pay and low achievement? A step in the right direction would be the privatisation of the JTV and radio stations, enhanced and enforced intellectual property rights protection, a modern antitrust law and easy registration procedures for athletic clubs. (You are right: economists are never ones to give simple answers; besides, this way one can never be proven wrong.) Privatising the JTV and radio will guarantee that the monopoly power enjoyed by one station in the broadcast of athletic events would be avoided and that the new stations would compete and bid up the price of the events thus generating more revenues to the clubs. Furthermore, advertisers will have more than one venue to advertise and thus more advertising would occur generating more revenue and sponsorship to athletes. Thus athletes will be competed for

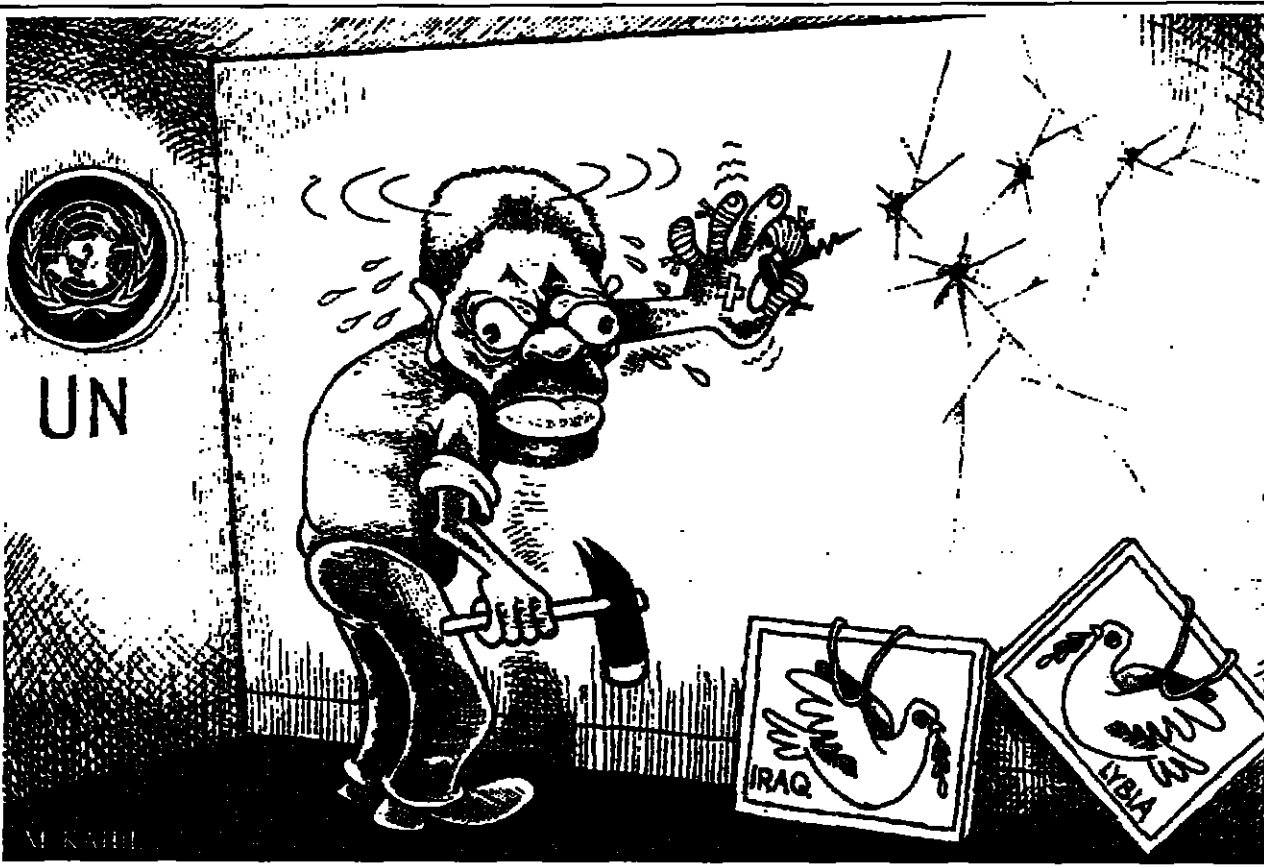
and sponsored more — sponsorship is possibly the single most important factor behind the creation of great athletes and athletic teams in the U.S..

Adequate and fully enforceable intellectual property rights will guarantee that the athletes will reap some of the benefits of their fame and that it does not all go to the club or some copy-cat in a dark alley who contributed nothing to the process. The rewards of fame, therefore, need not come from salary incomes alone but from advertising some products or being a spokesman. Unless intellectual property is protected there will be no need to pay someone for having his name or photo on a jersey or t-shirt, never mind a pair of shoes.

Antitrust legislation guarantees that clubs do not monopolise access to the market and prevent other clubs from forming and that clubs compete freely for athletes. Otherwise, one club may monopolise the whole arena and still pay athletes very little which in the end would further deteriorate the level of athletic competition in Jordan. Furthermore, it is to prevent monopoly profits from

forming that entry into the athletic market by clubs should be kept simple, at least from the legislative and procedural side. Otherwise, incumbent clubs would rely on being the only clubs and lower the incomes of their players, reduce expenditures on athletic events and provide a low quality output in the end — monopolists never worry or think about the customer. Alas, clubs that think in this manner would be cutting their nose to spite their face because while this strategy may be successful in the short run, it ultimately fails in the long run as the market becomes smaller and smaller.

The answer to bad athletics economics is to treat the athletic field as a market and to seek what forces there are that make it function as such. The answer is not in collecting donations because altruism cannot be relied on for sustaining excellence in the long run. The answer is not in asking the government to do more, but in the case of athletics we should ask the government to do less — ease the registration procedures for clubs. The answers are within our reach.



We will fight them on the speeches

By Stuart Jeffries

AS CRUISE missiles flew into Baghdad, Bill Clinton and Tony Blair seemed to be reading from the same script. "I have ordered a strong, sustained series of air strikes against Iraq," said the President from the White House. "They are designed to degrade Saddam's capacity to develop and deliver weapons of mass destruction, and to degrade his ability to threaten his neighbours." "If he will not, through reason and diplomacy, abandon his weapons of mass destruction," said the prime minister, standing in front of his Christmas tree, "they must be degraded and diminished by military force." What was most striking was not so much the transatlantic unanimity of expression, and the attendant, disturbing possibility that the prime minister was merely echoing His Master's Voice, but rather than an old verb had been unleashed in a new context.

"To degrade" sounds like something that would happen in another desert — a Foreign Legion officer degrading a disgraced soldier by ripping off his epaulettes, breaking his sword and trampling his cap into the sand. Perhaps this is what Clinton and Blair intended to convey: they were going to overthrow and humiliate Saddam. Perhaps even throw his beret into the Tigris.

But no, the word 'degrade' was being used by Clinton and Blair in a much less specific sense. Although the most common meaning of the verb, according to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, is 'to reduce to a lower rank, depose from a position of honour,' there are other senses. The dictionary also defines degrade as 'reduce in strength, amount, or some other measurable property.' This Blair-Clinton sense of the verb, according to the dictionary, is usually reserved to refer to 'reductions in colour.'

But that is appropriate. The colourless lexicon of modern war euphemisms — fatalities, neutralisation — has a new addition. Like the others, it repulsively distances one from the reality of war, and this sense of the verb is vague, allowing Clinton and Blair to be cagey about their objectives. 'Degrade' does not suggest that Saddam's weapons of mass destruction will be obliterated; it

does not entail that Saddam will be deposed by force; it does not say anything very much.

We, the civilians reliant on television mediation for our visual picture of the strikes on Baghdad, are consumers of war and so it is no coincidence that the language of war echoes the rhetoric of shopping. Shopping is supposed to be pleasurable, or at least not disturbing, and so the language that advertisers use to encourage us to buy is, by turns, insouciant, seductive, euphemistic and banal.

Increasingly, our leaders and some journalists talk about war in the way they would talk about shopping. Sometimes there is misplaced insouciance (the Sun's front-page 'thought' on Thursday was: 'Cruise at Ten'). Sometimes the language is candy-coated ('friendly fire'). Sometimes it is banalised into affectless accountancy ('degrade'). But blood, bombs, death — such words, such real words, rarely get heard.

The images we saw after 10 p.m. on Wednesday were as banal as the rhetoric. Apart from the odd flash of anti-aircraft fire, the green screen behind Gordon Brewer on Newsnight might as well have been a CCTV camera in Ipswich town centre for all the insight into human suffering and destruction it showed us. It was the same during the Gulf war: what we saw was, for the most part, mostly a 'clean' war, with lots of pictures of weaponry, footage from the nose cameras of 'smart bombs,' and hardly any images of injury. This is partly why the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard wrote The Gulf War Did Not Take Place: if there was a war in the Gulf, it was not what we saw on CNN.

Baudrillard had another point: this was not a war, but a ludicrous mismatch, presented on TV as a conflict between a virtuous military machine and an Oriental stereotype, a hysterical rug salesman and trickster.

The only apparent constant down the long years of wartime rhetoric is patriotic sentiment. Blair spoke of British servicemen "risking their lives," and thus ushered us into an unquestioning sentimental affiliation with a cause about which we might otherwise have been sceptical. Clinton's patriotic flourish

invoked a complex national myth of the United States as lion, slow to rise from its slumbers but decisive when it did, but paradoxically also the global ombudsman of peace.

But patriotism has its proper place in wartime leaders' rhetoric. Once the ancestors of our TV viewers weren't just consumers of war, but were embroiled directly in it. Churchill could not have afforded to use the rhetoric of shopping when he sought to steel civilians against Nazi attack with his 'we will fight them on the beaches' speech. He had to invoke a more ancient national myth than that of a nation of couch potatoes; he had to tell Britons that they had hearts of oak. Political leaders, understandably, always strive to manoeuvre their people into a particular emotional response when their country is at war.

The most overwrought example of this, typically, is Margaret Thatcher. When South Georgia was recaptured on April 25 1982, she marched into 10 Downing Street and shouted: 'Rejoice. Just rejoice!' We must, she implied, feel as she felt and not do the democratic thing — question our leaders.

Clinton and Blair would never stoop to that conqueror's level of rhetoric, but like her, they are concerned with military action far away from their native soil and so can afford to speak of it without enjoining their civilian population to prepare themselves for struggle and sacrifice. Saddam does not have that luxury.

Wars haven't taken place on American or western European soil for so long that we can experience them as akin to intellectually diverting entertainment. Until Tony Benn spoke up on Newsnight, telling Gordon Brewer that his pictures from Baghdad were supposed to be entertaining viewers, but concealed rather than revealed the reality of death and injury, no one saw fit to talk in such affecting, truthful language. The Anglo-American 'Desert Fox' had thrown sand over our eyes from the beginning, preventing us from seeing what is going on or talking about it properly. We have been degraded from the start, in a third sense of the verb, which the dictionary defines as 'to lower in quality, or character, debate.'

—The Guardian

In the Land of Oz

By Ray Hanania

ACCORDING TO the Gallup Poll, more than 74 per cent of the American people support the bombing of Iraq.

It makes me wonder if they are watching the same things that I am on CNN?

Several of my colleagues where I work quietly talk about how "cool" it is to watch the bombs explode over the Iraqi city of Baghdad. It's as if their hands are clutching the plastic controls of a Play Station video game, directing fire themselves on imaginary targets.

I can't control my emotions as I watch the Cruise missiles streak across the Baghdad sky and strike their targets, exploding in clusters on the city's horizon, right there on my television screen. The sound is muted by my television volume control and loses the sensation of horror that must accompany the sonic like booms.

Do Americans realise how ugly this moment really is?

Maybe not. It is difficult to rush through the heavy crowds of shoppers, their arms overflowing with holiday season gifts neatly wrapped and tied with red and green bows. A portly man stands outside the store on Chicago's State Street downtown wearing a red and white costume of Santa Claus, slowly shaking a large golden bell that clangs loudly through the congested sidewalks. Without as much as a glance, the passers-by drop shiny new coins into the red cauldrons as they quickly rush past.

Is that how carelessly they see the bombs falling onto Iraq?

The windows of the stores are filled with Christmas scenes. Jesus in the Manger in Bethlehem, surrounded by the Three Wise Men and a small lamb kneeling at the edge. The faces of the little children light up with excitement as the animated figurines bend and move in the store windows, their imaginations certain of the presents they will receive in only a few days time.

In another window, CNN's Christian Amanpour calmly describes the devastation that takes place in the distance behind her. She shares the same sense of patience with her audience as they wait and watch for something exciting to occur. They are not let

"There it is," she declares in an adrenaline rush. A cluster of Cruise missiles fly above in the sky like meteorites crashing into a Hollywood movie. Smoke billows from the unknown targets and the CNN reporter's patience is rewarded with excellent TV camera footage.

It's the stuff of big time journalism awards that await Amanpour and her colleagues as they return home, safe, from the frontlines of another war with Iraq.

As easily as they pause in their shopping frenzy to catch a glimpse of "Operation Desert Fox," the American war against Iraq, they quickly resume their pace. They're off to another store, those 74 per cent of Americans who say they support the bombing of Iraq.

How much more ugly can this scene get? The money that is used to pay for each Cruise missile comes right out of the paycheques of these American consumers.

More than one million dollars for each Cruise missile, and hundreds of them streak across the Iraqi skies.

Saddam Hussein appears on Iraqi TV in taped messages prepared deep within the safety of his luxury palaces are broadcast to the hapless Iraqi civilians who one can only imagine are gripped in total fear.

The Devil himself. The man that the Americans helped create in another war long forgotten against another Devil, the Ayatollah Khomeini.

That was yesterday. Who knows? Maybe in a few years, Saddam Hussein will be on our payroll again, if 74 per cent of Americans believe that he can help them contain some greater villain who threatens the security of their daily lives.

Like a soap opera on American TV, Desert Fox is just another chapter in the make-believe world of most Americans. This is a country where hatred and compassion share the same stage in stark contrast. Where a man who can dig deep into his pocket for change to hand to a beggar on the street, can tell The Gallup Poll that bombing Iraq is the right thing to do.

What else exciting is there to watch on TV?

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A SPANISH JOURNALIST...

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After uncovering Umayyad mosque, Spanish-Jordanian team finds an early Byzantine church at Amman Citadel

(Note: This is the first of two articles on the work of the Spanish-Jordanian team on Amman Citadel; the second article will discuss the Umayyad era mosque, plaza and souq complex that has been excavated on the Citadel.)

A SPANISH-JORDANIAN team of archaeologists and architects working on the Umayyad complex on the Citadel of ancient Amman has just discovered a small Byzantine church that could be among the earliest in the country. This is the second significant religious structure to have been discovered and excavated by the team, following last year's unearthing of the large Umayyad mosque on the Citadel, in front of the now domed Umayyad era Audience Hall.

The latest discovery of the small, rather poorly built church is historically important because this may be one of the earliest churches in Jordan, and among the earliest in the entire world for that matter — if further excavations confirm its construction date possibly as early as the 4th Century AD. The evidence is intriguing, but still inconclusive, according to team director architect/archaeologist Ignacio Arce. He heads the Spanish field mission to excavate, conserve and restore the Umayyad Complex on the Citadel.

He said in an interview at the Citadel last week that the church was discovered by accident when he and his Jordanian colleagues were trying to clarify the urban layout of a partly excavated area of the Citadel, immediately north of the modern road and east of the museum. The Jordanians working on the project are archaeologists Ghassan Ramahi, Mohammad Nasser, Hanadi Taher and Bassem Abbad, and engineer Manal Rimawi.

As they cleared and excavated the area, they ran into some very low wall remains around a central cistern opening, which they assumed to be a typical courtyard arrangement. Only a few centimeters of soil covered the floor at the base of the wall remains, and when they cleared the walls and the dirt they discovered first a simple mosaic floor and then the foundations of a semi-circular apse pointing towards the east. Further excavations revealed blocks of stones aligned with the north end of the apse structure — which turned out to belong to a pier that separated the northern aisle of the church from its central nave.

The full excavations revealed a church measuring at least ten metres long and six metres wide, with a central nave apparently flanked by two aisles to the north and south. The exact dimensions of the

church are not clear, because some of its walls have totally disappeared and its west end is not yet identified. This is partly because it was built on a bedrock platform above several underground water cisterns, some of which collapsed and took with them parts of the church walls. (Immediately north of the church are visible some cisterns whose roofs collapsed).

Few artifacts have been found that can help to date the church. The most notable is a coin from the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Constantius, dated to 348 AD. One side has the face of the emperor with the Latin inscription DN CONSTANTIUS PFAUG, while the other side carries the image of a soldier leading a figure (a barbarian?) from a wooden hut, with the inscription (F)EL TEMP REPARATIO, along with other letters that are not clear.

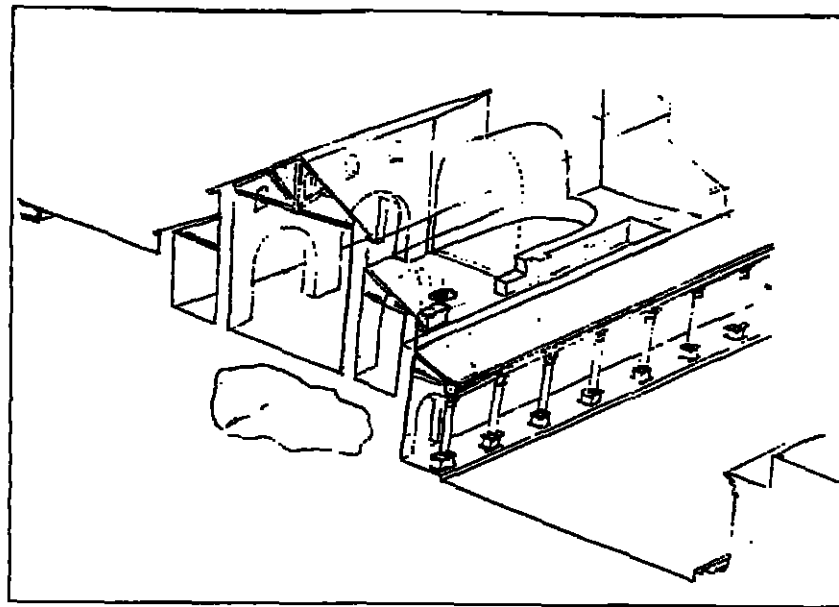
Should this coin and other evidence indicate clearly that the church is from the early 4th Century AD, this would be among the very earliest churches in Jordan and the world. Most Byzantine churches in Jordan date from the late 5th through the early 7th Centuries AD, with only a handful of 4th Century churches. (This is the third possible early church discovered in Jordan in the past year —



A. The 4th Century AD coin found at the Citadel church shows a soldier leading a figure (barbarian?) from a wooden hut (#122), and on the other side, a portrait of the Emperor Constantius (#126)

following the 4th Century church at Umm Qais (Roman-Byzantine Gadara), and a mudbrick building at Agaba that may have been built as a church as early as the late 3rd Century AD.)

The location of this newly discovered church within the Citadel of Amman is noteworthy, and may help clarify the his-



B. A hypothetical reconstruction of the church by Ignacio Arce

tory of the building — especially in relation to the larger, more handsome 6th Century Byzantine church whose remains have been fully excavated some 25 metres to the north-east. One of the fascinating dimensions of this new discovery is what it may reveal about the early history of Christianity in this area.

The church is located on a natural rock platform that forms one level of a terraced area in the middle of the upper Citadel. When it was first built, the church seems to have been tucked away in an inconspicuous corner of the city, making use of existing walls for its own structure. The south wall of the church seems to have been part of the north wall of the Roman temple's temenos (or holy precinct). The north wall of the church seems to have been a pre-existing wall that was related to the underground cisterns — perhaps a retaining wall of some sort that was needed to bolster the partly-excavated, partly-built cisterns complex. The date of the original construction of the cisterns complex is not known, but it was clearly used in the Roman period and almost certainly before that, Arce notes.

The church entrance has not been identified, but was probably in the west wall, near the present museum. This would have placed the entrance well away from the main street in Byzantine times; that main street ran from the east side of the church, northwards towards the area on the summit of the Citadel that would

house the Umayyad complex in the 7th Century. The street has now been almost fully excavated, and reveals Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad and Abbasid levels. It varies in width from two to three metres, was nicely paved with large stones in the Roman and Byzantine eras, but in the Umayyad and Abbasid eras was re-surfaced with a hard lime and earth pavement.

By the spring of next year, visitors to the Citadel will be able to stroll up the entire length of the street, between the two churches, into the Umayyad era plaza and souq, and then up the monumental staircase to the mosque.

The north and south walls of the church are not parallel, but converge slightly towards the east, because the church had to fit within the space between the existing walls. The church engineers hid this convergence by keeping the central nave within two parallel rows of pillars, while the north and south aisles each tapered towards the east. The entire church structure, therefore, is not a rectangle, but more of a trapezoid shape.

An interesting aspect of this church — in contrast to the 6th Century church nearby — is that its construction technique was rather poor (rubble masonry with an inconsistent earth-based mortar); and, it did not seem to have any architectural elements that were robbed out from the adjacent Roman temple.

Arce's working hypothesis is that this

church was built in the early Christian centuries, perhaps in the 4th or early 5th Century AD, when the Roman temple was still in use, which is why no stones were looted from the temple to build the church. This inconspicuous, slightly awkward, and almost hidden location of the church may also reflect the fact that the Christian community at that time still faced hostility from pagan Roman elements of society, even after Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the empire. (The Christian community of early 4th Century Amman is known from historical accounts of the persecution of martyrs during the days of the Emperor Diocletian around 300 AD, and from the fact that a city bishop attended the church council of Nicaea in 325 AD.)

More than two centuries later, however, by the 6th Century AD, Arce suggests, the Christian community was fully in power, the former Roman pagan temple had gone out of use, and the stones of the temple could be robbed for the construction of the large, well built 6th Century church that still stands on the east side of the Citadel's ancient main street.

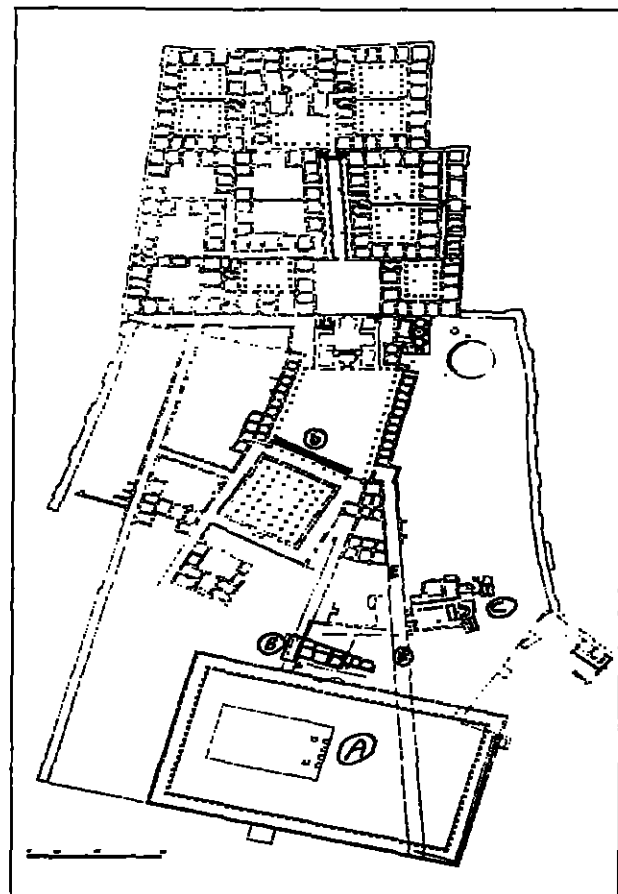
The contrast in the position of the two churches is striking, and telling: the earlier, smaller, poorly built church was tucked away off the main street, on an awkwardly sloping hillside amidst water cisterns and behind a temple wall; the larger, more beautifully decorated 6th Century church was located with its entrance immediately on the main street of Byzantine Amman, in a very prominent position.

The excavations in this area are continuing, with funding



By Rami G. Khouri

primarily from the government of Spain via the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, in cooperation with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.



C. The Citadel area, showing the Roman temple (A), the newly discovered church (B), the previously known 6th Century church (C), the newly discovered mosque/plaza/souq area (D), and the Roman-Byzantine-early Islamic road (E). (Plan by Ignacio Arce).

Health

India gets the giggles in quest for good health

By Sarat Chandra Das

EVERY AFTERNOON, a continuous ripple of laughter rises like an orchestral crescendo through the glass windows of one of Delhi's largest hospitals.

The pitch of the laughter varies like jazz music on a free scale. A curious crowd gathers below in the under-nurtured garden. One visitor believes the burst of laughter comes from a hideous asylum, where the mentally ill are going through electroshock therapy.

The reality is as far removed from that images as it could be. Perched on a rectangular carpet in a hospital hallway, a group of people cross their legs and raise their arms, looking almost as if they are at prayer. Through control of their breathing, they slowly stoke their energy up to the top of their spines. Storms seem to gather on their faces, and eventually they open their mouth and let go. This is how they learn to laugh.

The man behind this show is Dr. S.C. Sethi, a middle-aged paediatrician. He is inspired by Norman Cousins' book Anatomy of Illness, which says the absence of laughter and of vitamin C are the two primary causes of illness.

"I picked laughter because it is easy on the system," said Sethi. "I practised all by myself before encouraging the crowd to laugh."

Sethi arranges a daily gathering in the hospital from 3 to 4 p.m., an unofficial club whose participants are mainly hospital employees. Laughing is part of their yoga curriculum.

"Initially it was not easy as people felt they were to put on a show, but when it became a regular exercise they were completely at ease," Sethi said.

In Delhi's public parks, people gather to laugh every morning and evening. Janakpuri, a residential pocket of west Delhi, regularly hosts an early morning laughing gathering. Participants come from all walks of life — doctors, government officials, school teachers, even security officers who have been taught to stiffen their face like granite for their job and find it difficult to relax and laugh.

"It's hard to believe that people who look morose the previous afternoon laugh so heartily and for so long," says J. Kumar Arora, a retired senior civil servant and participant in the laugh-in.

Laughing is already a mass movement in many cities of western India. It may have originated in the Lokhandwala Park in Mum-

bai's Andheri suburb, where Dr. Madan Kataria, a local physician, began a course of laughter with a handful of people. The movement then crossed Thane Creek to tickle the sides of smaller and more sedate cities like Pune, Nashik, Ahmednagar, Indore, Baroda and Ahmedabad.

"They were hesitant and shy about laughing in the open, but gradually they picked up the chorus," Kataria said.

Kataria said they initially believed no one other than a circus clown could make them laugh. He kept his sessions going with a stock of jokes heavily borrowed from the Reader's Digest. "Initially, I had to try hard to make people laugh but now no more, since people have realised the physical benefits of laughter,"

Today they laugh almost at everything, wisecracks or shaggy dog stories, irreverent anecdotes and anti-climatic punchlines.

Today there are more than two dozen laughing clubs around Mumbai, with more than 3,000 participants. The membership is free. The clubs observe a somewhat strict protocol: men and women stand in parallel rows, like a co-educational school during morning prayers. The tutor stands solemnly in front of the crowd before he keys them up to laugh. The laughter takes its course through routine breaks for jokes and temporary lulls when the participants feel the laughing is becoming too heavy on their stomachs.

"That is only a small cost you pay to ease out your stress," says Kataria.

The Indian Yoga Institute, with 450 centres across the country, is responsible for bringing laughter into the hospital and elsewhere. It circulates literature that says laughing helps the abdominal muscles flex and contract, giving a mild massage. "As you laugh, you inhale and exhale more deeply," says its brochure. "More oxygen, the vital force of existence, enters the body and toxins automatically get thrown out."

When the brain is at peace, it produces alpha waves at between seven and 13 cycles per second, which — according to Aditya Kataria, a physician who enrolled in his namesake's laughing club at Lokhandwala, released endorphins, the "feel-good hormones."

"These hormones lift up the spirits with optimism," he said. "When a person laughs, these hormones are released in plenty, thus making a person feel happy."

— Gemini News

Marijuana advocates push for legal use

By Mahmoud Kassem
Reuters

ONE BY ONE, they came to the podium — lawyers, doctors and business executives — to confess publicly their years of marijuana use.

"I've smoked marijuana for 30 years, and inhaled too," Paul Kuhne, a Tennessee businessman, told a recent conference called by the National Organisation for Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) to explain the difficulty of smoking marijuana and being a social conservative at the same time.

Kuhne came to the conference to defend medicinal marijuana.

His wife, who died recently, also used medicinal marijuana.

"My business partner told me I had to stop smoking marijuana if I wanted to keep my job," he said. So he stopped.

He drank martinis instead and wrote letters to newspapers calling for the legalisation of marijuana, prompting police to raid his home after a surveillance operation.

There they found posters and leaflets calling for the legalisation of marijuana. And again his partner warned him.

"My business partner told me I had to take down those posters if I wanted to keep my job," he said.

Kuhne, with other successful middle-aged professionals, came to Washington to press for legalisation of marijuana and for the day when adults would not be penalised for using it.

According to the FBI's most recent Uniform Crime Report, state and local officials arrested about 700,000 people on mariju-

na charges in 1997. Activists want to cut this figure to zero.

NORML could not have timed its annual conference better. In the Nov. 3 elections more than 55% of voters approved measures legalising the use of marijuana for medical purposes in Alaska, Arizona, Nevada, Oregon and Washington state.

More than a quarter of all Americans have smoked marijuana at some point in their lives, according to polls conducted for NORML, but few have come to the capital to make a declaration, and fewer still in high office are prepared to put an end to what activists say is hypocrisy.

"Look where marijuana got Bill Clinton. Politicians confess their youthful indiscretions, then call for tougher drug laws," sniped Eitan Nadeltmann, a professional activist against anti-drug measures. Clinton, in his first run for president in 1992, said he had tried marijuana but had not inhaled.

Other participants in the conference justified marijuana legalisation by citing well-known figures such as Britain's Queen Victoria who allegedly ingested cannabis regularly. Some even showed their defiance by openly smoking the drug.

Irvin Rosenfeld, a stockbroker and one of a handful of legal users in the country who obtain their marijuana from the U.S. government for medical purposes, sat at the back of the conference hall puffing on one of his rationed joints.

"Law enforcement can't touch me," he explained with some relish as he flaunted a bag of marijuana cigarettes that he receives freeze-dried from the government.

Every year the Office of National Drug

Policy reminds the conference that smoking marijuana is illegal. Only a handful of marijuana smokers are exempt, certified by an experimental 1978 programme that the government is phasing out.

The government says it has not shifted from a long-standing line: "Smoked marijuana damages the brain, heart, lungs and immune system." It spent \$17.1 billion this year to combat drugs, and the Education Department alone is spending \$739 million to warn children off drug use.

Barry McCaffrey, head of the White House anti-drug office, said after the election that marijuana reformers ignore scientific principles in their drive to legalise the drug.

"The propositions (to legalise medicinal marijuana) are thinly veiled attempts to legalise marijuana for general use," McCaffrey said. "Marijuana advocates have mounted a well-financed, sophisticated public relations campaign to persuade Americans to their point of view. They use personal anecdotes rather than science to support their position." Despite last month's approval of medical marijuana in five states, the federal government has maintained its opposition to the drug by denouncing the methods of medical marijuana activists and in one case by blocking election procedures.

In Washington, D.C., exit polls by NORML showed that 69 per cent of voters backed legalisation, but a provision inserted in the budget by Representative Bob Barr, a Georgia Republican, bars the district from using any funds to count the vote, so the referendum has no legal effect.

"These initiatives in Alaska, Arizona,

Colorado, the District of Columbia, Nevada, Oregon and Washington state are deceptive and dangerous," McCaffrey said. "Allowing a purported medication to circumvent federal approval does a great disservice to the American public."

Marijuana activists reject federal interference in state initiatives, saying it only shows how out of touch with public opinion the government is. "It's time for the government to get out of our personal lives and let us as individuals decide... how we conduct ourselves in the bedroom and whether we smoke marijuana or drink alcohol when we relax," NORML Director Keith Stroup said.

Activists do not agree on the best way to legalise marijuana, but all agree that the recent success of medical marijuana initiatives marks a watershed for their movement.

Some believe medical marijuana should be the first goal and the acceptance of marijuana at a grass-roots level will lead ultimately to wider progress for personal freedoms.

"A modicum of discretion and a low-key approach is the key to success for medical marijuana," said Robert Raich, a lawyer for the Cannabis Co-operative in Oakland, California, where the city council declared a medical state of emergency when federal authorities ordered the co-operative to close on Oct. 20.

It has since reopened but Raich fears too much publicity galvanises federal agents to file closure orders. "Vociferous and aggressive calls to legalise marijuana are not always good for the immediate cause of legalising medical marijuana," he said.

Smell of war may trigger Gulf War Syndrome

By Patricia Reaney
Reuters

RECURRING SYMPTOMS of Gulf War Syndrome could be triggered by the tastes, sounds and smells of the 1991 conflict, British psychologists said on Tuesday.

Thousands of veterans of the war to oust Iraqi troops from Kuwait have complained of the mysterious illness. Chronic fatigue, asthma, depression and skin ailments are just a few of the symptoms.

Scientists have not pinpointed the cause of the sickness but veterans blame it on exposure to organophosphate pesticides or the cocktail of drugs they were given to protect them from chemical and biological warfare.

Dr. Eamonn Ferguson and Helen Cassidy, psychologists at the University of Nottingham in Northern England, said the pesticides or drugs could have set off an

immune response in the body linked to an increase in interleukin-1 (IL-1), a natural immune system chemical.

"If you look at the symptoms the Gulf war veterans (show) there is almost a one-to-one correspondence with the sort of thing you would see with increased IL-1 activity. There could be a link between IL-1 activity and the type of symptoms reported," said Ferguson.

In a report presented to a meeting of the British Psychological Society, the researchers said smells of diesel fumes, oil, fire or anything veterans associate with the war, and traumatic memories could set off the sickness response.

"There is a possibility that some of the symptoms associated with Gulf War Syndrome could be based on an associative learning mechanism, but that's not to say they are not real symptoms," Ferguson added.

Although their theory cannot fully account for Gulf War

Syndrome, the scientists said it could explain the recurring symptoms veterans report years after they returned home. If the psychologists are right, they believe the illness could be treated with counter-conditioning.

"If it is an associative mechanism and people associate certain memories, smells and tastes with feeling ill, then you can try to identify and pair them with other pleasant stimuli to overcome that link," he explained.

Ferguson added that if IL-1 is part of the mechanism of Gulf War Syndrome, drugs known as IL-1 antagonists may be used to treat the illness.

"It may be a safe and effective pharmaceutical therapy, especially as an IL-1 antagonist already exists in the brain," he said, adding that much more work still needs to be done.

Veterans groups say up to 51,000 British troops served in the Gulf war and 6,000 are now ill.

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Malki: Job growth target

THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS package that President Obama signed into law last week has a target for job growth that is far more ambitious than any previous president has set, says U.S. Commerce Secretary John M. M. Malki.

Malki says the target is to create 3 million new jobs by the end of 2010. The target is based on the assumption that the economy will grow at a rate of 3.5% in 2009, and 4.5% in 2010. The target is based on the assumption that the economy will grow at a rate of 3.5% in 2009, and 4.5% in 2010.

2000

HORO

SALES: March 1994: April 1994

[illegible]

A cartoon by Charles Schulz. A boy with a large head and a small body, wearing a patterned shirt, is looking at a speech bubble. The speech bubble contains the text: "CLOSE ALL SCHOOLS! ALL THE SC". The cartoon is signed "Schulz" in the bottom right corner.



Banquet Award Lunch: The Marriott held its Banquet Award lunch on Sunday, December 13, 1998. The quarterly event is designed to acknowledge associates' hard work and recognise exceptional performers. This is one of the many ways that the Amman Marriott Hotel expresses its continuous appreciation for its associates and staff.

Peanuts

CLOSE ALL THE SCHOOLS! CLOSE ALL THE SCHOOLS!

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VIA NORTH AMERICA SYNDICATE INC.

I RECKON SHE'S THE BEST-LOOKING LASS I'VE EVER SEEN IN THIS PLACE, JACK.

YES, ANDY, BUT TALK ABOUT SHARP—SHE CAN MAKE A FOOL OF YOU IN TEN MINUTES.

IF YOU SAY SO, JACK, BUT WHAT A TEN MINUTES—?

Andy Capp

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YES, ANDY, BUT TALK ABOUT SHARP—SHE CAN MAKE A FOOL OF YOU IN TEN MINUTES.

IF YOU SAY SO, JACK, BUT WHAT A TEN MINUTES—?

Mutt'n' Jeff

JEFF, I'LL TEACH YOU TO USE PROPER ENGLISH—NOW WHAT ARE VOWELS?

AH, CHICKENS!

NO, NO, JEFF! YOUR EDUCATION IN ENGLISH IS AWFUL! — LET'S SEE NOW!

THE MOOOS! THERE'S THE INDICATIVE MOOD, IMPERATIVE MOOD AND SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD! NOW LET'S TAKE THE SENTENCE, "THE COW WAS IN THE PASTURE." — WHAT MOOD?

THE COW!

YOUR GRAMMAR IS NOT SO GOOD!

LAST TIME I SEEN HER, SHE WAS O.K.!

LET'S TRY GEOGRAPHY! WHAT DOTHEY RAISE THE MOST OF IN CHINA?

?

CAME AND CHINESE!

THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen

GLASBERGEN

"If I don't spill anything on the rug, does that count as doing my share of the housework?"

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

LECCY

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DUPLD

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Answer here:

(Answers tomorrow)

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Arghenti

I'm ready to collapse

HOW THE RECRUITS FELT AFTER A DAY OF DRILLS.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

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(Answers tomorrow)

[illegible]

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Malki: Jordan torn between achieving growth target and maintaining dinar stability

THE ECONOMIC growth achieved during the 90s is not enough and if we want to record reasonable rates the economic policies and strategies, which rely on the adjustment programme followed during the past five years, should be changed, said Abdulla Al Malki, an economic writer and analyst.

Malki who publishes the bi-monthly magazine The Economy Today warned against cancelling "the national economic articles" and merging into the international market because any global crisis will affect us. "Freedom should always be followed by a sense of more responsibility," he indicated noting that "we, in Jordan suffer from a sharp contradiction between achieving a growth target and maintaining the stability of the dinar exchange rate."

Describing this contradiction as painful, Malki did not see any solution for it in the near term. "We are only betting on time (for a solution)," he stressed.

The respected writer, who was lecturing at Al Faiha Club recently, told his audience that Jordanian banks are not responsible for the development as their role is only in financing it. "I am not against boosting the capital of banks and mergers but the base (factor) always is the soundness of lending without which the size of a large bank would not help," he stressed noting that the size of a bank is not always a sign of healthy conditions or safety. "The most effective banks in the world are not the large ones," he concluded.

Abdul Qader Dweik, the general manager of the Housing Bank, also

addressed the audience and told them that he expects the current high interest rate to stay for the coming six months "until our (Jordan's) foreign exchange reserves rise." He admitted that the high interest rates harm investments and that commercial banks tend to favour trade more than industrial projects. Dweik explained that industries require long-term financing whereas deposits at banks are short-term. "Yet, banks finance the working capital for industrial projects but cannot risk an imbalance between sources of funds and utilising them," he indicated noting that there are specialised banks to finance industrial schemes.

Dweik emphasised that banks in Jordan must boost investments in technological spheres as 80 per cent of banking services around the world are being provided easily without requiring clients to come personally to banks. He saw the need for raising administrative efficiency, increasing capital adequacy and creating additional financial resources.

The general manager of the Housing Bank said the new stage requires banks to have a minimum capital of JD50 million stressing that "shareholders' equity should be the first line of defence and that the fixed assets of banks should be from the equity accounts and not the depositors."

Dweik saw the stability of the dinar exchange rate as one of the important tasks of the Central Bank and indicated that raising interest rates was one of the tools of intervention to keep the Jordanian currency attractive (Al Dus-tour + Al Ra'i).

Mulki's visit to Iraq awaits green light

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy Hani Mulki Sunday said he is awaiting word from Iraqi officials to travel to Iraq to renew Jordan's annual oil deal with its eastern neighbour.

The visit had been scheduled for Sunday, but the U.S.-led air strikes against Iraq, which started in the early hours of Thursday, forced the minister to postpone his visit.

"I will travel to Iraq whenever the Iraqi officials deem the visit to be possible," Mulki told the Jordan Times.

An Iraqi newspaper on Friday quoted the Kingdom's ambassador in Baghdad Hmoud Al Qatameh as saying, "the visit aims at negotiating Jordan's need

of crude oil and its products for next year in accordance with an agreement between Iraq and Jordan."

Since the 1991 Gulf war Iraq has been exporting more than 75,000 barrels of oil per day to Jordan, part of which is charged at market prices and the rest at undisclosed concessionary terms.

Jordan's oil purchases from Iraq are exempt from U.N. sanctions which ban Baghdad from exporting oil as punishment for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, apart from limited quantities to purchase food and medicines.

Iraq and Jordan started talks in October this year in Baghdad on construction of a \$350 million oil export pipeline linking the two neighbours.

Price weakness prompts record surge in mergers and acquisitions — study

LONDON (AFP) — Low inflation in Europe has fuelled a surge of company mergers and acquisitions, which were worth a record of \$58.5 billion in November, a study has showed.

The rush to consolidate companies was likely to press on unabated, particularly in the banking and telecoms sectors, JP Morgan Securities house said.

An equities analyst at the bank, Gary Dugan, said: "The recent declines in inflation have caught out companies. The lack of pricing power is forcing them to try to capture market share through mergers and acquisitions."

Developments since the study of merger activity in the month of November have confirmed the continued rush to merge. On Dec. 9, Zeneca of Britain and Astra of Sweden announced a \$67 billion merger to create one of the biggest global pharmaceutical groups.


That announcement followed news on Dec. 1 that the German Hoechst and French Rhone-Poulenc companies planned to combine their activities in the health sector to create Aventis, a world leader in life sciences, with sales of \$20 billion.

Merger-mania is by no means unique to Europe. Also on December 1,

Exxon and Mobil oil giants unveiled a record \$77.2 billion tie-up to create the world's leading oil group.

"Merger and acquisition activity is expected to continue at a pace driven by low growth, very low inflation and global competitive pressures. Look out for the financials and telecoms," said Dugan.

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HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You'll see career opportunities today and tomorrow, and you won't have to find them all by yourself. Your friends will be pointing them out to you. A person who thinks you're really neat could come right out and say so. To increase the chances of that being someone you also admire, how about asking that one out?

Taurus: (April 20 to May 20) There will be a test, but don't worry about a thing. You'll ace it. You're very strong now and getting stronger. You'll be learning and growing and becoming even more marvellous the whole time the sun is in Capricorn. It always happens like that this time of year. That's why you love the winter so much.

Gemini: (May 21 to June 21) You'll notice you're more interested in financial matters, specifically, money you have with other people. That includes money you borrow from them, as in credit cards. Today and tomorrow, you'll want to spend on travel or education. Study aids are the better option. If you're going to travel, find somebody to share expenses.

Cancer: (June 22 to July 22) Your resources may look bleak, but you're not in this game all by yourself. You've got others willing to play with you, and one in particular could be your partner. Schedule dinner with that person tonight to talk about the possibilities. You two can put on a good better show if you work together than either of you could alone.

Leo: (July 23 to August 22) Your workload increases today, so don't even try to do everything by yourself. It's not as much fun as sharing the load. Leo is the sign of a good leader, and the way you do that is by delegating. Your energy level is high and your attitude should be excellent, so tackle a tough assignment.

Virgo: (August 23 to September 22) There are problems that need your attention. You'll have to fill paperwork and meet demanding people's expectations. And you'll have to do it promptly, accurately and with a smile on your face. Make sure to take time for yourself, too. Do something you enjoy, even if you can only afford to spend a few minutes as it.

Libra: (September 23 to October 23) Venus, for love, is in Capricorn. This sign sometimes stirs you to take action, and this week it could help you whip your place into order. You want your living environment to be beautiful, especially today, because it looks like you have the opportunity to entertain a very fascinating and attractive person. Do it up right.

Scorpio: (October 24 to November 21) Today and tomorrow are good for making decisions concerning home and family, or for moving things around at your place. You probably know what you want to do, so put the changes into effect quickly. Once you get things the way you want them, you'll want to leave them that way for a while, so do it right.

Sagittarius: (November 22 to December 21) Don't give up on a problem you're facing. You may get the answer you seek at the library, or in that stack of magazines you've got saved. The information is nearby, but you will have to go to the work of actually assimilating it. It's not going to jump into your brain by osmosis.

Capricorn: (December 22 to January 19) You're getting stronger everyday. Wiser, too. Its partially because you've been studying, partially because you're listening to what's going on around you. The more attention you pay, the more obvious the correct course of action will be. There are signposts all over the place; just heed them.

Aquarius: (January 20 to February 18) Generally, if you quit a project, its because you ran into something you couldn't figure out, or maybe something a little scary, a little outside of your area of expertise. Well, that's the sort of thing you'll have to face in the next few weeks. Hold your ground and face it. Chances are its nowhere near as formidable as you thought.

Pisces: (February 19 to March 20) You're a loner sometimes, usually because you're shy. During this phase, its easier for you to fit in with the group. The project you've assigned yourself may be too difficult to do by yourself anyway, so that's your motivation. Let other people help, and you help them in return. The synergy will make the whole job easier, and fun.

Birth Stone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

Ex-Soviet, East Europe economic reforms slow down in 98 — EBRD

(Continued from page 8)

The report forecast that the whole ex-Soviet and eastern European region will see a one per cent decline in output in 1998 and two per cent next year, primarily due to the recession in Russia, where output is expected to fall by five per cent in 1998 and seven per cent next year.

However, in central and eastern Europe and the Baltics, output is forecast to grow by three per cent this year and 3.5 per cent next year.

According to the report Hungary and Poland have made important progress in financial sector reform and in enterprise restructuring.

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Tajikistan have made "up lost ground in liberalisation and privatisation" following their respective wars.

However, Russia has been hit by policy reversals in reaction to its economic meltdown this summer, while Belarus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have shown weak commitment to reform in general, the report said.

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MIDDLE EAST BK	1.030	1.040	+ 0.97%
THE HOUSING BK	2.700	2.700	0.00%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.680	1.680	- 2.98%
UNION BK	0.970	1.020	+ 5.15%
JO. INVEST. BK	1.450	1.450	0.00%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.570	0.570	0.00%

BANKS INDEX 280.420 point = +0.43%

INSURANCE

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AHLIA INS	1.110	1.110	0.00%

INSURANCE INDEX 123.080 point = -0.40%

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REAL ESTATE	1.680	1.100	- 4.76%
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AL-RAY	5.380	5.400	+ 0.75%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.820	0.850	+ 3.66%
ARAB INTL. FOR INVEST.	1.980	1.980	- 3.02%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.110	1.120	+ 0.90%

SERVICES INDEX 106.610 point = -0.30%

INDUSTRY

CEMENT	3.100	3.150	+ 1.61%
PHOSPHATE	1.420	1.490	+ 4.93%
ARAB POTASH	3.000	3.000	0.00%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.000	10.190	+ 1.90%
WOOLLEN IND	1.080	1.140	+ 4.59%
THE IND. COMM. & AGRIC	1.050	1.100	+ 4.76%
WORSTED MILLS	5.960	6.180	+ 3.67%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2.580	2.580	+ 0.76%
CERAMIC IND	1.140	1.210	+ 6.14%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.210	1.230	+ 1.65%
THE PUBLIC MINING	1.600	1.680	+ 5.00%
NTL STEEL	0.520	0.500	- 3.85%
DAKAL DAWA	5.000	4.580	- 8.40%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.580	0.580	0.00%
JO. STEEL	0.970	0.980	+ 1.03%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.900	1.880	- 0.95%
NTL IND	0.400	0.410	+ 2.50%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.360	0.360	0.00%
CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE	0.910	0.980	+ 7.69%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	1.160	1.160	- 0.86%
ALADDIN	2.200	2.050	- 6.82%
NTL CABLE	0.680	0.690	+ 1.47%
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EL-ZAY	1.270	1.270	- 2.05%
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NTL ALUMINIUM	0.690	0.700	+ 1.45%

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Thais finally win over Games critics

BANGKOK (AFP) — Thai organisers laughed off dire predictions that preceded the Asian Games and emerged smiling Sunday at the end of one of the most scandal and drug-free international sports events ever held.

The recession stricken host nation won over fierce critics who even at the start of the year were ready to find an emergency home for the last major sports extravaganza of the century.

The stadiums were ready, though the paint was still wet in places, and the notorious Bangkok traffic kept moving. Organisers even managed to fight off thousands of insects that invaded the swimming pool.

"We had many scare stories about the traffic and people were worried that athletes could get stranded on their way to venues. But there's been nothing of the sort," said Anwar Chowdhury, head of the international amateur boxing federation.

Naoko Takahashi of Japan opened competition with a stunning victory over heat and humidity in the women's marathon.

After Lee Bong-joo of South Korea won the final gold medal Sunday in the men's marathon, the scene was set for the closing ceremony and the Olympic Council of Asia flag to be handed to the South Korean city of Pusan, venue of the 2002 Asian Games.

The star of the 6,700 athletes from 41 nations at the 13th Asiad was Japan's triple gold sprinter Koji Ito, who was voted the most outstanding competitor, while China topped the medal table with 129 golds.

China's gold haul was

almost double that of second placed South Korea with 65, but China's state sports leaders are worried because it was eight less than in Hiroshima four years ago.

Delegation chief Yuan Weimin on Sunday highlighted the lack of world class performances among his 800 athletes. He commented that they had "not passed their mid-term examinations ahead of the Sydney Olympics with flying colours."

Japan was third in the medal rankings with 52 golds, but eclipsed China in the swimming, winning 15 golds to 13.

Japan almost caught up in the athletics, where China sorely missed the magic of Ma Junren's middle and long distance runners. China narrowly won the gold battle 15-12, but Japan found a hero in sprinter Ito, who was a pace away from becoming Asia's first sub-10 second 100 metre runner.

Ito ran 10.00sec dead on the way to winning the title and also took gold in the 200m and the 4x100 metre relay.

Nearly every country found something to celebrate.

Iran's World Cup players secured the soccer gold with a 3-0 win over Kuwait in Saturday's final.

The Thai hosts won 24 gold medals, their best performance ever, with pride of place going to Olympic boxing champion Somluck Kamsing who retained his 57kg title.

India celebrated seven gold medals with national celebrations over the men's hockey team which won gold in the national sport for the first time since 1966 and

booked their place for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney.

In all 36 sports, only two weightlifters from Kuwait and Jordan failed drug tests, enabling the Bangkok Asian Games.

Organising Committee to declare the games one of the cleanest held.

"In this Asian Games we have found the lowest level of drug use compared to other major sports events," said Ruangsak Siriphol, the doctor in charge of testing.

"I cannot say whether it is the cleanest Games, because we have not conducted tests on every athlete, but we think so."

China, which is stepping up a campaign to secure the 2008 Olympics, were particularly happy to get through without a drug scandal. Seven swimmers failed dope tests in Hiroshima and there were four more at this year's world championships.

Shang Xiutang, secretary general of the Chinese Athletics Association, repeatedly reminded Chinese athletes not to take any medication even for a fever or cough.

But China did add the only serious controversy when the team announced that a "Chinese speaking" agent approached a top table tennis player to throw a final.

Amidst widespread concern, the Olympic Council of Asia decided it could not do anything and the scandal was buried.



Atlanta Olympics silver medalist Lee Bong-jul of South Korea raises his fist in the air as he wins the gold in the men's marathon for the last event of the 13th Asian Games at Tammassat University Sports Complex in northern Bangkok. Lee clocked 2 hours 12 minutes 32 seconds and won the gold (AFP photo)

Asiad winners & losers

By The Associated Press

WINNERS

China — Although it slipped from 1994 in both overall gold medals and percentage of medals won, China is still Asia's top sports power. Even with declines in swimming and track, the Chinese are becoming powers in other sports, like rowing and beach volleyball. After some of its 1994 medals were drug-tainted, the Chinese said they carried out extensive testing before these games so prevent any repeat.

Naoko Takahashi, Japan — The Japanese marathoner opened the competition with probably the top performance of the games, the fifth fastest women's marathon ever, winning by more than 13 minutes in Thailand's tropical heat.

South Korean Fans — In every sport, they enlivened the stands with organised cheering, flag-waving and drum-beating to support their teams.

Thawatthai Damrong-Ongrakul, Thailand — His golden goal in sudden death extra time against South Korea made Thailand forget about all its economic difficulties for two days until the team was routed 3-0 in the semifinal by Kuwait.

Koji Ito, Japan — His 10.00 seconds for the 100 metres would be respectable in an Olympic 100 final. He also won gold in the 200 and 4 x 100 relay, and was named the games' Most Valuable Player.

The opening parade of athletes — A wide variety of uniforms, fashions and cultures in which Sri Lanka's athletes, accompanied by drummers and gyrating dancers, stood out.

LOSERS

China — No matter how many medals it wins, it still has to fend off questions about drug cases that have tainted its performances as recently as the swimming World Championships in January 1998.

Susantika Jayasinghe, Sri Lanka — After coming in second in the world championship 200, she arrived with great hopes for her country. Her sudden withdrawal from the 100 final and quick return home, citing injury, opened criticism that she was afraid of losing to Chinese runners — a suggestion she denied.

Any Fighter against Samluck Kamsing — The Thai Olympic gold medalist boxer had a whole nation cheering against his foes.

Malleswari Karnam, India — She equaled two weightlifting world records in the women's 63-kilogramme division but lost to China's Lei Li, who broke the world records for snatch and total lift. Chinese women bettered world marks in every division.

South Korean third-placers — South Koreans who finished third in some bowling, archery and equestrian events were denied bronze medals under a games rule that limits one country's medals in any event to two. Organisers said the rule was intended to promote harmony at the games. The Koreans protested that they wanted all three medals in those events.

World Cup boycott bad for Asia — Iran star

BANGKOK (AFP) — Iranian goalkeeper Nima Nakisa believes an Asian boycott of football's 2002 World Cup finals would damage the sport.

Iran won the Asian Games gold medal on Saturday, beating Kuwait 2-0 in the final, and Nakisa believes the team can qualify for Asia's first-ever finals, in South Korea and Japan.

"It would be very hard on the Asian teams if that were to happen," said the 22-year-old. "I think it's between us, China, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for the places at the next World Cup."

FIFA, the game's governing body, has allocated Asia only two places at the World Cup in addition to the two the hosts will automatically receive.

But the Asian Football Confederation has threatened a boycott if the continent does not receive more places.

A six-man AFC delegation will travel to Zurich for talks in February. They will push to have Asia granted a play off against Oceania for a third place.

The play-off for 2002 was awarded to South America by FIFA, a move which also upset Oceania nations.

Iran qualified for France 98 by defeating Australia in the away goals rule in the Asia-Oceania play-off after they had finished fourth in Asia's qualifying tournament.

France was the first time Asia had been represented by four teams at the World Cup.

"I'm sure Iran would qualify with another team because I'm sure we'll have a strong team by then and we'll do well," said Nakisa. "But it would be very bad if we were not allowed to play."

Ma-less China fails to prove superpower status

BANGKOK (AFP) — China's ambitions of establishing itself as a world athletics power were left in tatters after its worst Asian Games performance for more than a decade.

The Chinese shot themselves in the foot by leaving the out-of-favour super-coach Ma Junren at home. They ended top of the Bangkok athletics medal table but saw their gold tally well down on 1994 and almost halved compared with eight years ago.

Japan, led by all-conquering sprinter Koji Ito, filled the vacuum with a superb track-and-field showing.

But they admitted they had benefited from China's failure — as did a string of small nations including the mercurial Sri Lankans and Qataris.

Four years ago Primo Nebiolo, head of the International Amateur Athletic Federation, predicted China would be the sport's leading power by 2004, adding: "In five years, their men will be as strong as their women."

There was little sign of that progress in Bangkok. In Beijing in 1990, China took 29 of 43 golds. In Hiroshima they took 22 titles. Here, the total was down to 15, just ahead of Japan's 12.

Significantly Ma Junren, who coached Wang Junxia, O Junxia and Liu Dong to world titles and a string of world records in 1993, had been responsible for six of those Hiroshima victories.

But Ma, currently building a new "army" of middle and long-distance runners, was barred here after a row with his masters. Several other champions also stayed away.

Yasunori Hamada, Japan's national athletics coach and a friend of Ma's, responded: "Personally, I'm very disappointed."

"We like winning but we want to beat the best." Chef de mission Terui Kogake added: "We know this was not China at full strength. They will definitely pour in their effort for the Sydney Olympics."

Ito won three golds — the sprint double and in the 4x100m relay. He ran a new Asian record of 10.00 in the 100m and added Games records in his other two events as he cemented himself as a world-class performer.

Takahashi went even better.

Her 2hr 21min 47sec in the marathon was the fifth fastest time of all time. Considering the lack of opposition, the heat and humidity, it was also arguably the best marathon ever run by a woman.

There were a host of other double winners.

The gutsy Li Xuemei of China got off her hospital bed following a week of fever and stomach problems to win the 100m and a sprint relay gold before getting silver in the 200m. Li, the seventh fastest woman in history, was only denied a hat-trick of golds by Damayanthi Darsha.

The Sri Lankan, who had already won her specialist 400m event, won her second gold in the 200m even though she had not trained specifically for it.

She broke the Asian Games record in two successive races to time 22.48sec, edging out Li by seven hundredths.

Mohammad Suleiman of Qatar, meanwhile, went down in history with a 1,500/5,000 double that gave him five Asian golds in his career.

Jyotirmoy Sikdar of India — a country of a billion people compared to Qatar's half-a-million — took the women's 800 and 1,500 gold and then anchored the 4x400m relay to silver behind China.

But her achievement was in part overshadowed by the despair of Indian legend P.T. Usha.

The 34-year-old, braving a hamstring problem in search of a 34th Asian Games or Championships medal, failed in the 200m, finished sixth in the 400m final, missed a sprint relay bronze by a tenth of a second and was ditched from the 4x400m team at the last moment.

At least she got closer to a medal than Sri Lanka's controversial Susantika Jayasinghe.

The world 200m silver medalist, facing a drugs investigation which could wreck her career, ran one 100m heat and then flew home, mysteriously citing a leg injury.

Final medals tally

BANGKOK (AFP) — Final official medal tally at the end of the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok on Sunday:

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
China	129	77	68	274
South Korea	65	47	52	164
Japan	52	61	68	181
Thailand	24	26	40	90
Kazakhstan	24	24	30	78
Taiwan	19	17	41	77
Iran	10	11	13	34
North Korea	7	14	12	33
India	7	11	17	35
Uzbekistan	6	22	12	40
Indonesia	6	10	11	27
Malaysia	5	10	14	29
Hong Kong	5	6	6	17
Kuwait	4	6	4	14
Sri Lanka	3	0	3	6
Pakistan	2	4	9	15
Singapore	2	3	9	14
Qatar	2	3	3	8
Mongolia	2	2	10	14
Myanmar	1	6	4	11
Philippines	1	5	12	18
Vietnam	1	5	11	17
Turkmenistan	1	0	1	2
Kyrgyzstan	0	3	3	6
Jordan	0	3	2	5
Syria	0	2	4	6
Nepal	0	1	3	4
UAE	0	1	1	2
Macao	0	1	0	1
Bangladesh	0	0	1	1
Brunei	0	0	1	1
Laos	0	0	1	1
Oman	0	0	1	1
Total	378	381	467	1226

Bangkok too hot for N. Korea

BANGKOK (AFP) — North Korea's top sports official on Sunday blamed the hot weather for his country's low-key performances at their first Asian Games in eight years.

The mercury hardly dips below 25 degrees Celsius in Bangkok, while the Sulistat — which is still embroiled in a Cold War dispute with the rival South — is more used to minus 10 degrees Celsius at this time of year.

"The temperature difference made certain athletes give low performances," said vice sports minister Chang Ung said as North Korea finished with seven gold medals, down from 12 at the 1990 Beijing Games.

"There will be no problem at the Sydney Olympics," said Chang, a member of the International Olympic Committee. "There will be no big difference in the temperature and we are in the same time zone."

North Korea boycotted the 1994 Games in Hiroshima due to diplomatic rows with Japan.

Russian boxers are here — to stay

BANGKOK (AFP) — "The Russians are coming" was the anxious cry from Asia's boxing powers when the former Soviet republics were admitted into the Asian Games fold prior to Hiroshima.

Four years on, the Russians are here to stay. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, formerly part of the mighty Soviet boxing machine, won three golds each out of the 12 on offer compared to four golds in Hiroshima.

Only Thailand, with five titles, and an audaciously talented Indian, Dingko Singh, put up any resistance in what turned out to be a world class competition.

But the Thais, apart from having world-ranked boxers led by 57kg Olympic champion Somluck Kamsing, had a definitive advantage fighting in front of their home crowd.

Their biggest test will be at the world championships in Manila next August, where Filipino fans, their pride damaged by abject failure in Bangkok, are likely to be as hostile as the Thai fans in Bangkok were supportive.

Anwar Chowdhury, president of the International Amateur Boxing Association, believes the Central Asian republics have helped boost the quality of Asian boxing.

"I think the standard of boxing at the Asian Games has been the best ever," said Chowdhury. "The Central Asian states provide a real interesting challenge to teams like Thailand and the Philippines."

"It seems that only Thailand have decided to take up the challenge. They prepared very well for this tournament by going to the United States and Cuba to train."

"We'll see how they do in the World Championships, where the competition will be stronger."

Thai team manager Thavatchai Sajakul expects to send a strong team to Manila as part of Thailand's preparations for the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000.

"Everything we do from now on is aimed at the Sydney Olympics and the

World Championships is definitely an important part of it," said Thavatchai.

"We are happy with our results at the Asian Games. It was all down to good preparation. We worked very hard."

The Philippines, boxing kings four years ago in Hiroshima, where they won three golds, came to Bangkok with high hopes, having gone on an intensive, one-month training trip to Cuba before the Games.

However, they could only manage one bronze in Bangkok thanks to Eric Canoy in the 57-kilogramme event.

The Uzbeks and Kazakhs are among the world's best boxers in the heavier divisions, but were outclassed in Bangkok at the lighter categories.

Their lightest gold medalist in Bangkok was Uzbekistan's 63.5kg boxer Mahamatkadir Abdullaev.

"We still have a very strong team," said one Uzbek official. "At the Asian Games, we always knew that Thailand, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan would be the favourites."

"But at the World Championships, there will be other countries as well. That will be a bigger test for everyone." Kazakhstan exceeded expectations with three gold medals out of four final-ists.

Only Hiroshima gold medalist Nurzhan Smanov failed to win his final, beaten by Thailand's Parkpoom Jangphonak in the 67kg event.

One of the brightest prospects came from India. Singh, an orphan who almost never made it to Bangkok, took the 54kg gold with impressive wins over Thai favourite Sontaya Wongprates in the semis and Uzbek Timur Tulyakov in the final.

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FOR RICHER OR POORER		RED CORNER		SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY		ISMAILIA RAYEH GAI		DESPERATE MEASURES		THE HORSE WHISPERER		Watch out for the new play	
Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:15, 6:30, 10:30		Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30			
						CONCORDE "2" MAVERICK							
						Shows: 2:15, 8:30							

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

1998 — The 'Year of Sports Sleaze'

PARIS (AFP) — Allegations of bribery, vote selling, drugs and match-fixing, along with lockouts and strikes turned 1998 into the 'Year of Sports Sleaze.'

A hint of the battering international sports would take came in January when Australia customs officers in Sydney discovered a Chinese swimmer trying to smuggle 13 vials of human growth hormone into the country for the world championships in Perth.

When four Chinese swimmers were later sent home after being caught taking the illegal diuretic Triamterene, a masking agent for anabolic steroids, the tone for the year had been set.

The battle for the most powerful job in sport — president of FIFA, football's ruling body — ended in allegations of vote buying. Claims of cash being handed over on the eve of the election in Paris in June did nothing to enhance the tarnished image of sports politics.

The stunning victory of Sepp Blatter as new FIFA president to replace the retiring Joao Havelange was quickly followed by threats of legal action by anyone who dared claim that supporters of the former secretary general of FIFA had paid for votes.

The defeated Lennart Johansson, who looked as if he had been hit by a sledgehammer when the count was announced, hinted at wrongdoing but behind-the-scenes talks quickly produced a united front and allegations of skulduggery were overtaken by the action on the field as France went on to beat Brazil in the final.

But the host nation's euphoria was replaced by horror when the Tour de France was wracked by the biggest drugs scandal to hit any sport.

The world's most famous cycle race found itself fighting for survival.

As the French police staged raid after raid only 14 of the 21 teams that started the blighted Tour remained, dramatically reducing the field of riders.

Italian cyclist Rodolpho Massi of the Casino team, who was wearing the King of the Mountains jersey, went out of the race when he was taken for questioning by police after drugs were found in his room.

Frustrated riders staged strikes as the Tour limped towards Paris. Race organisers were left trying to salvage something from the wreckage.

The International Olympic Committee, a self-proclaimed paragon of virtue, found itself being rocked to the core in December. Former International Ski Federation president and IOC member Marc Hodler suddenly declared in Lausanne that IOC members had demanded money from cities bidding for the Olympics.

The 80-year-old's bombshell stunned the IOC leadership, who promptly set up an investigation. Lurid tales of mysterious agents and IOC members receiving tens of thousands of dollars in gifts and cash for their support had cities from Sydney to Atlanta to Nagano proclaiming their innocence.

Games organising committees admitted knowing of approaches but all denied trying to bribe their way to success.

Beijing, who lost the 2000 Games to Sydney, repeated their complaints that there was more than met the eye in their two-vote defeat to the Australian city.

The English Football Association (FA) found itself without a chief executive or chairman when it was claimed two men had tried to buy votes to win England a place on FIFA's executive committee. The committee decides who will host the World Cup.

Chief executive Graham Kelly quit while chairman Keith Wiseman refused to stand down until the FA meets in January. The scandal left

England's campaign to win the 2006 World Cup in tatters.

In America, the basketball season failed to start as the players and owners fought over how the billions of dollars generated by the sport should be divided up.

The owners locked the players out and for the first time in its history the

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

NBA risked losing the entire season. Money was at the heart of a power struggle between Europe's top football clubs at UEFA, the sport's governing body in Europe.

Super clubs such as Manchester United, Juventus and Real Madrid threatened to create their own European Champions League. UEFA finally came up with a deal that would make the rich clubs richer and prevent the crisis that would have changed the face of football.

Cricket found itself battling against allegations of sleaze when it was revealed that two of Australia's cricket icons had been paid by bookmakers to report on the state of the pitch and the weather during Australia's tour of Sri Lanka four years ago.

The Australian Cricket Board were forced in December to admit they had known about Shane Warne and Mark Waugh, the latter having earlier testified in an enquiry over corruption in Pakistani cricket after he alleged being offered bribes by former Pakistani captain Salim Malik, taking the money and although they fined them the matter was kept deliberately quiet.

In Asia, match-fixing in football left the Asian Football Confederation reeling. Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia and even South Korea have now been implicated.

It was 12 months that underlined that sport and sleaze shared more than the letter S.

Unhappy year for boxing's big names

PARIS (AFP) — Oscar de la Hoya, Roy Jones, Mike Tyson, Prince Naseem Hamed and Roberto Duran are among the biggest names in boxing. But 1998 was not a particularly rewarding year for any of them.

De la Hoya, touted along with Jones as the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world, was relatively inactive and saw his biggest fight postponed when he was cut in sparring. He also faces charges of having raped a minor.

The WBC welterweight champion is accused of raping a girl in 1996 — when she was just 15 years old. De la Hoya and his handlers have dismissed the claims out of hand.

American de la Hoya, 29-0 with 24 knockouts, is scheduled to defend his title on February 13 in Las Vegas against Ghana's Ike Quartey, who is 34-0 with one draw — in a battle of unbeaten fighters.

The contest was scheduled for November, but was called off when de la Hoya reported he was hurt in training. Boxing was awash with rumours that the boxer, a high stakes gambler, was out of shape. De la Hoya did manage one significant result during the year — stopping Mexican legend Julio Cesar Chavez in the eighth round of their rematch in September. He also scored a third-round TKO win over France's outgunned Patrick Charpentier in June.

Jones, an unquestionably talented technician, has failed to grab the imagination of the boxing public despite his undoubted talents.

He boasted of moving up to the heavyweight division but thought better of it and remained among the light-heavyweights, where he scored three significant but uninspiring victories.

In April, Jones knocked out former champ Virgil "Over the Hill" with a fierce body blow in the fourth round and then scored a points victory over fellow American Lou Del Valle to unify the WBA and WBC light-



Mike Tyson

heavyweight titles.

Then, in November, Jones stopped Canadian Oris Grant in the 10th round to retain both belts.

Jones posted his 38th victory, his 32nd inside the distance, against one disqualification defeat but is still not the superstar he should be.

Hamed, loved by British fans for his showboating style, failed to make the impression he wanted to when given a big opportunity in the United States.

He ended the year by splitting with his long-time Irish trainer Brendan Ingle.

The WBO featherweight champion had been trained by Ingle since the age of seven but took exception to comments in a book about his trainer criticising the pugilist for concentrating more on the money than the fighting.

Hamed blatantly ignored Ingle's advice, which was issued second-hand via Ingle's two sons in the corner, during his title defence against Wayne McCullough in Atlantic City in October. He scored

a lacklustre points victory and was jeered by the crowd.

Hamed has often been accused of avoiding top-notch opposition in favour of fighting second-raters and needs to face a big name opponent in the new year to salvage his reputation.

Legendary Panamanian Duran, meanwhile, saw his stellar career end with a dismal defeat.

William Joppy retained his WBA middleweight title by pummeling an ageing and faded Duran until the referee stopped the unedifying spectacle in the third round of their August mismatch.

Duran, at 46 almost 20 years Joppy's senior, began fighting before Joppy was born and won five titles in four weight divisions. He suffered his 14th, almost certainly final, defeat against 102 victories.

Former heavyweight champion Tyson didn't get into the ring in 1998 but he still suffered several blows.

Tyson will fight for the first time in 19 months on

January 16 when he makes his return against South Africa's Francois Botha — but the return might be short-lived as Tyson could be heading back to prison.

Tyson, who served a three-year prison sentence for rape, is set to make yet another comeback after being banished from the sport by Nevada officials for biting Evander Holyfield in the ring in June of last year. Tyson was reinstated in October after a long period of wrangling.

Tyson faces sentencing in Maryland in late January or early February after a "no contest" plea to assault charges in connection with an August 31 traffic accident near Washington.

Tyson could receive up to 20 years in prison and be fined \$5,000 by Maryland authorities. Indiana officials have said his admission could constitute violation of his probation from the rape charge.

Britain's Lennox Lewis and American Evander Holyfield, both of whom fought inferior opponents during the year, did get good news when agreement was reached on their unification bout.

Holyfield, 36, is the WBA and IBF champion. He is 36-3 with 25 knockouts. Lewis, 33, is the WBC champion and is 34-1 with 27 knockouts. The pair will finally get together on March 13.

That bout and de la Hoya v Quartey match-up at least give fight fans plenty to look forward to early in the new year.

Other fighters who emerged as genuine stars during 1998 will also be looking to gain further fame. Among them IBF lightweight champion "Sugar" Shane Mosley, who made five successful title defenses during the year, all by KO, and interim WBC junior-welter champion Kosyta Tszuyu, who proved he was on the way back with wins over both Rafael Ruelas and Diobety Hurlado.

Gebrselassie plans assault on world indoor 5,000 mark

LONDON (R) — Unbeaten on the track this season, Haile Gebrselassie returns to the boards early in the new year for yet another assault on time.

The best and most versatile distance runner of his generation has set his sights on the world indoor 5,000 mark in Birmingham, England, where the little Ethiopian will be cheered on by his fanatical British fan club.

"I have seen many crowds in other countries but this is a fantastic one," Gebrselassie said on a recent promotional visit to Britain. "I have never seen a crowd like that before." The Birmingham meeting on February 14 will serve as part of Gebrselassie's preparations for the world indoor championships in Maebashi, Japan, in the following month where Gebrselassie will attempt to win the 3,000 gold medal.

Longer term goals include a fourth world 10,000 metres title in Seville in August and a 5,000-10,000 double at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

The Sydney Olympics will provide a special incentive for Gebrselassie. Twenty years earlier, his childhood hero Miruts Yifter completed the same double at the Moscow Games.

One further goal beckons.

In 2001, Gebrselassie, who lives in the Netherlands for part of the year, plans to run the Rotterdam marathon.

Whatever targets Gebrselassie reaches in the future, his place in athletics history is secure.

Still only 25, he has set 14 world records, held six world titles and won Olympic gold over 10,000 metres.

This year he reclaimed his 5,000 and 10,000 marks from the Kenyan pair of Daniel Komen and Paul Tergat, won every one of his outdoor races and was named as the International Amateur Athletic Federation's male athlete of the year.

Gebrselassie wasted no time in making his mark at the start of the indoor season.

In January he set a world indoor 3,000 record of 7:26.15 in Karlsruhe, Germany.

He then ran the second fastest indoor 1,500 metres ever before breaking the world 2,000 metres mark in Birmingham.

Several months of high-altitude training in Ethiopia paid off on June 1 when he took more than five seconds off Tergat's 10,000 world record in Hengelo, Netherlands, with a time of 26:22.75.

Twelve days later in Helsinki he took almost half a second off Komen's world 5,000 mark, clocking 12:39.36.

Then he turned his attention to the new Golden League, eventually sharing the million dollar jackpot for remaining unbeaten during the series with Marion Jones and Hicham El Guerrouj.

One disappointment for spectators, if not Gebrselassie, was that the expected showdowns with Komen never came off.

After regaining the world indoor 3,000 record from Gebrselassie, Komen's form fell off completely, although he did win the Commonwealth 5,000 title.

For the moment, Gebrselassie is unchallenged as king of the track from 3,000 metres up. When he does turn his attention seriously to the road, he could redefine marathon running.

Jets soar to division title by beating Bills

BUFFALO (AFP) — For the first time in 29 years, the New York Jets are American football division champions.

Vinny Testaverde completed 14 of 23 passes for 184 yards and two touchdowns to lift the Jets past Buffalo 17-10 here Saturday, denying the Bills a chance to seal a berth in the National Football League playoffs.

If the Jets (11-4) win next week or Jacksonville loses one of their final two games, the New York club that finished 1-15 in 1996 will have a first-round playoff bye after only two years with Bill Parcells coaching.

"It's pretty emotional, I couldn't be happier," Parcells said. "I take pride in the fact we won this division. We're not the greatest, but mentally, we're pretty tough now. Beating these contenders on the road, we deserve to win the division. We got a lot ahead of us, I look forward to the challenge. By no means do I feel we're done."

The only other NFL game Saturday saw host Washington edge Tampa Bay 20-16, a result which assured playoff berths for the Green Bay Packers and Dallas Cowboys thanks to the Buccaneers' defeat.

Tampa Bay can still make the playoffs, but the Arizona Cardinals control their own destiny in the battle for the final National Conference playoff spot.

Testaverde made a seven-yard scoring toss to Wayne Chrebet in the first quarter and a 71-yard strike to Dedric Ward late in the third period.

As a result, the Jets took their first division title since 1969, the year before the NFL merged with the rival AFL, of which the Jets were a member.

The climb from dismal to darlings coincided with the arrival of Parcells from New England after he had led the Patriots to the 1997 Super Bowl.

"A long time coming, but a short time at the same time," said Jets wide receiver Keyshawn Johnson. "Two years

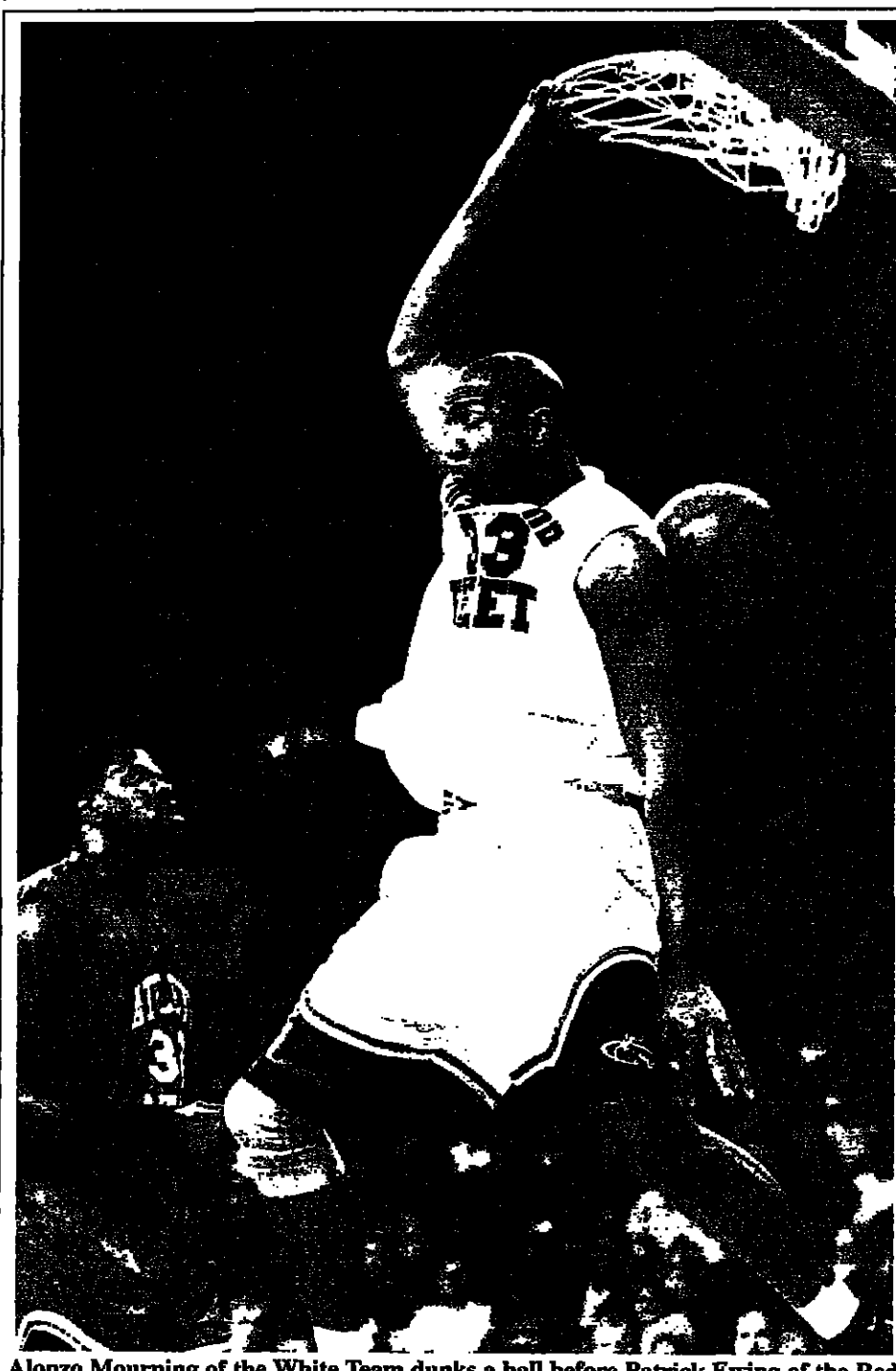
removed from being 1-15, what more can you ask for? A lot of the dreams and the goals are coming together right now. This time two years ago, I was packing my bags and going home. This is what a team is all about. The 1-15 team didn't have any chemistry at all. This is chemistry."

The Bills (9-6) can clinch a playoff spot if Tennessee loses at Green Bay on Sunday or with a victory next week at New Orleans.

The Jets ended Buffalo's best hope of equalizing late when cornerback Victor Green had an interception deep in Jets territory with 3:52 to play.

Buffalo's Doug Flutie completed just 14-of-38 passes for 220 yards as Buffalo outgained the Jets 366 yards to 269.

"It's very frustrating because we did move the ball up and down the field," admitted Flutie. "We should've put up more points than we did, especially in the first half. We had some opportunities."



Alonzo Mourning of the White Team dunks a ball before Patrick Ewing of the Red Team during the first quarter of the "The Game on Showtime" at the Atlantic City Convention Center. The game being played by NBA All-Stars, who are on strike is being held for charity (AFP photo)

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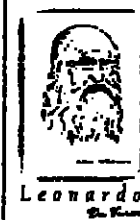
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ALL ARE WELCOME!

Netanyahu today faces parliamentary showdown

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Sunday got his cabinet to agree to the suspension of peace moves with the Palestinians, setting the scene for a showdown in parliament.

The cabinet voted unanimously but for one abstention to freeze the handover of West Bank land outlined in the U.S.-brokered Wye River accord until Palestinians meet a string of conditions.

The decision and a proposal by Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon to annex parts of the West Bank if Palestinians proclaim a state were widely seen as a gesture to appease right-wing legislators who have vowed to topple the government in a vote Monday over the land-for-security deal signed in Washington in October.

"Israel will complete implementation of its commitments in the peace process when the Palestinian Authority fulfils its commitments," a cabinet statement said, formalising a policy Netanyahu announced nearly

two weeks ago.

The cabinet decision paved the way for a vote in parliament on the same conditions. Netanyahu, who controls a tenuous 61-59 majority, announced last week that if he failed to win legislators' support for the measures, he would act to move elections up to early next year from late 2000.

Jewish settlers of the West Bank and Gaza, among the harshest critics of the Wye accord, said in light of the cabinet decision they would try to persuade right-wing legislators to back Netanyahu Monday.

"It's conditional. As long as there is no progress in the redeployment, we'll help him survive but it's a tactical decision," said settlement leader Shlomo Silver.

Settler leaders oppose ceding West Bank land they view as essential to Israeli security and the biblical birthright of Jews.

Backing from two of their supporters in parliament could mean the difference between keeping Netanyahu's govern-

ment afloat and heading for early elections.

For their part Palestinians said they had already met all their peace deal obligations and warned Israel the decision could lead to a new outburst of violence.

"This is a government of extremists which is... failing to take into account that its policies have led to bloodshed and could lead to more bloodshed in the future," said Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo.

Netanyahu demands that President Yasser Arafat abandon intentions to declare a Palestinian state, accept Israel's terms for freeing Palestinian prisoners, halt incitement and violence, collect illegal weapons and reduce the size of his police force.

Some of the terms are included in the Wye accord which called for a three-stage handover of West Bank land in exchange for Palestinian moves to bolster Israel's security.

Butler receives death threats

SYDNEY (R) — The Australian government said Sunday that chief U.N. arms inspector Richard Butler had received death threats over the bombing of Iraq by the United States and Britain.

Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer told reporters that protective measures had been put in place for Butler, a former Australian diplomat.

He said criticism of Butler was not warranted.

"Don't shoot the messenger. Richard Butler is simply carrying out the job he was mandated to carry out by the U.N.

Security Council," he said. "Richard Butler is not a pawn of any individual government."

A spokesman for Downer said he would not elaborate on the nature of the threats or the measures taken to protect New York-based Butler, the head of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of eliminating Iraq's weapons arsenal.

Butler's report to the United Nations last week that Iraq had failed to cooperate fully over weapons inspections was given by the United States last week as its reason for launching air attacks against Iraq.

Downer said the Australian government was pleased that the United States and Britain were satisfied their objectives had been met in the air strikes against Iraq.

"In the end any air strikes, any military action, is regrettable but those responsible have to understand that they brought this upon themselves," he said.

Australia quickly supported the United States Thursday when the bombing of Baghdad began in Operation Desert Fox. During the 1991 Gulf war, it sent two warships to the region.

Arabs voice anger, relief, but little support as Desert Fox ends

CAIRO (AP) — The airstrikes on Iraq accomplished nothing, boosted Saddam Hussein among fellow Arabs and made a dangerous conflict potentially more so, Arab commentators of all stripes said Sunday in a rare consensus.

From former U.S. allies in the Gulf war to hard-liners, there was clear agreement in the Arab World that the U.S.-British operation was a big mistake.

And outside the Arab World, reaction was muted at best, with leaders mostly expressing relief the strikes were over — and concern that the essential problem of containing Saddam Hussein still remains.

Only two countries, Japan and Australia, expressed clear support for the mission. Even Kuwait refrained from outright support, saying merely it "welcomed the announcement" that hostilities were over.

It was the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 that sparked the Gulf war.

In France, which disapproved of the use of force against Iraq, President Jacques Chirac said he was "delighted" the operation was over. The former foreign minister, Hervé de Charette, was blunter, criticising "the unbearable hegemony of American diplomacy."

China, which bitterly opposed the strikes, said it had "taken note of the fact that with the call of relevant parties, the United States and Britain ceased their air strikes against Iraq."

Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao also said China was ready to work with all interested parties to find a solution.

While Washington and London claimed they had severely disabled Saddam's military machine, others focused on the obvious fact that Saddam remains standing



BACK TO NORMALCY: An Iraqi man examines fruits on display on a market near a mosque in the centre of Baghdad on Sunday. U.S. President Bill Clinton Saturday announced the end of the four-day attack on targets in Iraq (AP photo)

— and that the strikes appear to have ended any hope of Iraqi cooperation with weapons inspections.

"The strike ends, but Saddam remains," said the Saudi newspaper, Okaz. To underline the point, a cartoon showed Saddam in an underground bunker, relaxing in an armchair with a cigar while watching TV coverage of the bombardment.

A day after pro-Iraqi protests erupted in many Arab countries, some resulting in violence, scattered protests continued Sunday.

In Morocco, valued by Washington as a stable ally in North Africa, some 100,000 demonstrated in the capital, Rabat, to protest the airstrikes.

"America, Enemy of the People," they chanted, and "Clinton, what if you kept busy with Monica?" The demonstration was organised by the National Committee for the Support of Iraq, and was joined by Islamic militants.

In Oman, which supported

the allies during the Gulf war, a pro-Iraqi demonstration of more than 300 students Saturday was the first political demonstration in the country.

The Omani newspaper Al Watan said the airstrikes had "failed to weaken Saddam Hussein internally and increased his popularity among the Arabs." It noted that the strikes resulted in Iraq's decision to end all dealings with the United Nations Special Commission, or UNSCOM, which is responsible for dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

This will only complicate relations between Iraq and the United Nations and could lead to the dismantling of UNSCOM, Al Watan said.

The Egyptian opposition press went much further, signalling possible retaliation from more extreme elements of the Arab World.

"Oh Arabs: Expel the American and British Ambassadors from the Arab capitals," said the Sawt Al

Umma (Voice of the Community), an independent weekly.

"Strike American interests," said Al Arabi, a weekly mouthpiece of the Nasserite Party.

Some of the most striking commentary came from Iran, which fought an eight-year war against neighbouring Iraq.

State-run Tehran Radio criticised the United States and Britain for taking unilateral military action.

"They want to resort to unilateral military action whenever they deem it fit and whenever their national interests are served," the broadcast said.

At the Vatican Sunday, Pope John Paul II expressed sadness over the airstrikes and bitterness that the crisis couldn't have been solved by peaceful means.

"The holiday atmosphere renders even more intense the suffering for all that has happened in these days to the Iraqi people, in the face of whose drama no one can remain indifferent," the pope said.

Family of tourist says wrong heart was returned

TEL AVIV (AP) — The family of a deceased Scottish tourist whose heart was removed and returned separately, claimed Israeli authorities returned the wrong organ. The family of Alistair Sinclair is suing Israel for \$250,000 for removing his heart and thyroid for medical tests without their permission.

Sinclair was arrested in Israel in April on his way out of the country on accusations he was smuggling drugs. Police found him the next morning hanging from his shoelaces in his cell, what police said was a suicide. The family says Sinclair was killed.

Williams bristles with energy

NEW YORK (AP) — Robin Williams is still cranky after all these years. "Yeah, Literally, it's like possession — all of a sudden you're in and because it's in from a live audience, you just get this energy that just goes on."

Williams, 47, says in the January issue of U.S. magazine of his still manic presence when doing stand-up comedy. Years of movie stardom and acting credibility built doing serious drama like "Dead Poet Society" and his Academy Award-winning turn as "Good Will Hunting" haven't truly tempered his zany performance style of stage.

Movies Connery's top priority

NEW YORK (AP) — Movies have always been Sean Connery's top priority even before he ever dreamed of becoming a star.

"I would play hockey and go to the Blue Hall, the local movie house, to watch the pictures," Connery, 68, says in the January issue of Biography magazine of his childhood in Scotland. He got his start in acting after winning a medal in a bodybuilding competition in London, where a casting director noticed him and offered a part in a British production of the musical "South Pacific."

Cher to get back silver wedding ring

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Cher will have to wait a little longer to be reunited with the silver wedding ring Sonny Bono gave her 30 years ago.

The woman who now has the ring was supposed to give it to Cher on Friday during a live broadcast on KISS-FM radio in Los Angeles. Instead, the woman turned up with a photo of the cherished ring — and an attorney. "Cher verified the ring was hers. [The woman and her attorney] want to do a private meeting with Cher in a safe area," said Von Freeman, marketing director for KISS-FM's parent company, Jacor of Los Angeles. "She is now convinced it is for real after seeing it. This is the ring."

Rome mayor demands vandal clean up famous piazza

ROME (AP) — Rome's mayor demands that a youth who carved initials in a newly restored statue of a lion in the city's pride-and-joy piazza spends three days at cleanup. On Saturday a student was caught by security guards vandalising a stone fountain in the shape of a lion. The student told police he was using a key to carve his girlfriend's initials.

Regent calls for ending suffering of Iraqi people

(Continued from page 1)

President Chirac on Sunday called for a review of the eight-year-old international oil embargo on Baghdad.

As French commentators and government supporters continued to flay the United States and Britain for their joint, four-day offensive, Chirac preferred to focus on the future.

"First of all, we must improve the living conditions of the Iraqi people who have suffered for so many years. This is possible and necessary. We have to do it very quickly, and France has a certain number of proposals to put forward," he said.

Acknowledging that the oil embargo imposed on Iraq following the 1991 Gulf war was a politically sensitive issue, Chirac indicated that he thought the conditions should be eased — so long as checks remained on Iraq's weapon building programme (see story below).

The Regent also told JTV that it was "important in the coming stage to give due attention to the dignity of the Arab countries and people."

He expressed apprecia-

tion to all efforts made by the concerned authorities to keep the borders with Iraq open under the most critical circumstances.

Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh, who accompanied the Regent on the visit, stressed the Jordanian borders will remain open for the Iraqis.

The visit to the borders, he said, sought to help the government see the situation on the ground.

"As you can see the borders are open, traffic is normal, oil shipments are continuing, and trucks are carrying goods as usual," Tarawneh said.

Earlier in the day the prime minister said the government shares with the people of Jordan the feelings of solidarity with the Iraqi people and realises the extent of injustice to which they have been subjected during the past decade.

In remarks during a Lower House of Parliament session and in reply to statements by the deputies, Tarawneh said that Jordan "did not incite any one, neither was it responsible for the causes of the latest crisis, and at the same time this country cannot repel an aggression

of this magnitude or stop the military operations." (See related story on page 3).

In reply to the deputies' statements during the session which was dedicated to discussing of the situation in Iraq and their demand that Jordan, along with the Arab states, end the embargo on Iraq, Tarawneh said "this country has suffered a great deal from the embargo and the Jordanian diplomacy has spared no effort and has knocked on all doors in its bid to lift the sanctions in vain."

"Jordan has been demanding that the U.N. end the embargo on Iraq, but we have to discuss what the lifting of sanctions really means as we ask was it Jordan, which is suffering from the sanctions regime, that imposed this embargo?" Tarawneh said.

The prime minister said that the issue of sanctions is on the mind of all Jordanian officials who are also concerned over the embargo's economic consequences on the Kingdom. "Jordan has made its business to bring up this question in the U.S. and elsewhere around the

world," he said.

In answer to deputies' calls for allowing more public rallies, Tarawneh said that "every one knows that Jordanians have expressed their feelings over the situation over the past few days through demonstrations and public rallies, and this has demonstrated the harmony and cooperation between the participants in these demonstrations and the security services."

Referring to the political parties, he said that they have been conducting discussion with the interior minister about the manner in which they can manifest their support for the Iraqi people.

The prime minister noted that the Hashemite Charity Organisation has announced a nation-wide campaign to collect donations, especially drugs and medical supplies as well as other forms of relief aid, and has opened centres for receiving in-kind contributions.

Tarawneh said Jordan will coordinate matters with the Iraqi government to ensure the arrival of the donations to the Iraqi people as soon as possible.

Iraqis express relief after strikes end

(Continued from page 1)

Baghdad's residents were confused on Sunday morning when air raid sirens wailed again. The all clear was given 15 minutes later with no official explanation available.

The last attack on Baghdad took place at 9:35 p.m. (8:35 p.m. local time) on Saturday when at least one missile fell metres away from the entrance of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, wounding three guards.

At least six people were injured in that incident in the Mustansiriyah neighbourhood.

Several cars parked nearby were damaged while the

rocket left a three-metre deep crater at the heavily-guarded site.

The U.S. and British missiles also damaged the headquarters of the ruling Baath Party near the Al Rashid Hotel, home to most of the foreign and Arab journalists covering the strikes.

Iraq has challenged the effectiveness of the attacks, saying on Friday it had shot down 77 out of 305 missiles fired in the first two days of raids and had brought down a further 23 missiles during the last night of bombing.

The decision to suspend the raids followed heavy bombardments of what Iraqi officials said were several civilian and military targets, especially in the southern

city of Basra and the headquarters of Iraq's elite Republican Guards, Saddam Hussein's main bedrock of support.

Unconfirmed rumours said that the building that supervises Iraq's military industry was also hit in the raid.

Many Muslim Iraqis said they were humiliated by the fact that missiles were raining down on them while they were starting their month-long fasting of Ramadan at dawn on Saturday.

"It was inhuman and barbaric as we could not even have our last meal (suhour) before the start of the day-long fast," said Manaf. "But we are happy that the strikes are over now."

Protest voices support for Iraqi people

(Continued from page 1)

President of the Jordan Bar Association Hussein Mjalli, a member of a popular committee of opposition parties and independent personalities who support Iraq, said "We should learn and examine several lessons from the crisis including that our leaderships are far away from their nations."

"We call on our leaders to expiate their sins by lifting the sanctions on Iraq and condemn the aggression in practical terms," Mjalli told hundreds of Jordanians gathering around him at the square's main clock and shouting "one Arab unity for one Arab nation."

As he spoke, behind him read a banner "Shame on you Arabs. Stop dealing with the U.S., U.K. and Israel."

The government had earlier said it was pained by the strikes but blamed the Iraqi leadership for failing to comply with U.N. resolutions.

Emily Naffa, a member of the Jordan Communist Party, demanded an international trial for the "enemies who want to dominate the region with their aggressive policies of double standards."

Surrounded by tens of citizens and reporters, opposition figure Leith Shubeilat said "Our governments are symbols of Arab Zionism."

"Unlike Arab countries, Iraq

will always win battles with the nation's enemies because it does not give up on its determination," Shubeilat added.

The march, organised by Jordan's 14 opposition parties and 80,000 professional associations, dispersed peacefully after around two hours.

"Although the attacking forces have stopped their strikes, the U.S., U.K. and their coward allies, including Arabs, will continue their stubbornness and aggression against Iraq and the whole nation," one young protester told the Jordan Times referring to Clinton's announcement late Saturday that the air strikes on Iraq had been completed.

The U.S. President made the announcement after the House of Representatives voted to impeach him, on two of the four counts brought against him.

Earlier in the day, representatives of the Kingdom's women's organisations staged a protest in front of the U.N. headquarters in Amman and delivered a message to Secretary-General Kofi Annan demanding practical actions to save the people and children of Iraq by lifting the sanctions, imposed after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

The government has not imposed an outright ban on demonstrations of solidarity with Iraq but it has warned that it cannot tolerate public disorder and will not allow inflamed popular passions to threaten stability.

"We are concerned about the freedom of expressing feelings against the problem, but in a proper and legal manner," Interior Minister Nayef Qadi said "Otherwise, the government might take certain measures against such action, and we do not want to be forced to do so."

Last Thursday, Qadi met with heads of Jordan's more than 20 political parties and stressed that any public expression of support for Iraq should be within the law.

Officials have described the domestic situation as under control and expressed relief there were only a few signs of internal unrest.

Meanwhile, according to a local newspaper, the Arab Organisation for Human Rights urged Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh to free "27" citizens detained after they joined a recent anti-U.S. demonstration in support of Iraq in the northern town of Irbid.

The newspaper said the organisation considered the detention as being "against human rights" and called for their "immediate release or referring to court if necessary."

Government officials could not be reached for comment.

Albright warns that U.S. may attack Iraq again

(Continued from page 1)

The president announced the end of "Operation Desert Fox" on the first day of Ramadan, the Muslim Holy Month of fasting.

Clinton said the goal had been to degrade Saddam's military base — especially his ability to deliver weapons of mass destruction — and his capacity to attack his neighbours. He said it would take time for a detailed assessment but that based on early reports, "I am confident we have achieved our mission."

"We have inflicted significant damage on Saddam's weapons of mass destruction programs, on the command structures that direct and protect that

capability and on his military and security infrastructure," he said.

Aside from ineffective use of anti-aircraft artillery, Iraq put up no resistance. But in the battle for world opinion, it struck Saturday with the announcement that it was ending all dealings with the U.N. Special Commission, which was created at the end of the 1991 Gulf war to oversee the destruction of banned Iraqi weapons and to ensure that they not be rebuilt.

At the Pentagon, Army General Henry Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters Saturday night that U.S. and British forces struck nearly 100 targets in Iraq during the air offen-

sive. He said U.S. and British planes flew 650 missions without a single casualty.

Among the sites hit, Shelton said, were seven or eight of Saddam's palaces, and the focus of Saturday's final attacks were Republican Guard forces, the most potent arm of Saddam's military.

Clinton called anew for a new government in Iraq. "So long as Saddam remains in power, he will remain a threat to his people, his region and the world. With our allies we must pursue a strategy to contain him and to constrain his weapons of mass destruction programme."

The Pentagon displayed videos of Navy laser-guided missiles striking two

Iraqi installations, and reconnaissance photos of several other facilities — including a missile repair station — that sustained moderate to heavy damage from navy and air force bombs and missiles.

Of 20 command-and-control facilities targeted, two sustained light damage, eight had moderate to severe damage and seven were destroyed, military officials said.

Assessments were incomplete on the three others. Bombs also targeted 18 facilities used to provide security for Saddam's outlawed weapons, and 11 of them sustained moderate to severe damage; five were lightly damaged and two were destroyed, officials said.

King. Mubara
ROCHESTER, N.Y. — The family of a deceased Scottish tourist whose heart was removed and returned separately, claimed Israeli authorities returned the wrong organ. The family of Alistair Sinclair is suing Israel for \$250,000 for removing his heart and thyroid for medical tests without their permission. Sinclair was arrested in Israel in April on his way out of the country on accusations he was smuggling drugs. Police found him the next morning hanging from his shoelaces in his cell, what police said was a suicide. The family says Sinclair was killed.

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Chad leader break Libya embargo

NEW YORK (AP) — Robin Williams is still cranky after all these years. "Yeah, Literally, it's like possession — all of a sudden you're in and because it's in from a live audience, you just get this energy that just goes on."

Williams, 47, says in the January issue of U.S. magazine of his still manic presence when doing stand-up comedy. Years of movie stardom and acting credibility built doing serious drama like "Dead Poet Society" and his Academy Award-winning turn as "Good Will Hunting" haven't truly tempered his zany performance style of stage.

Movies Connery's top priority

NEW YORK (AP) — Movies have always been Sean Connery's top priority even before he ever dreamed of becoming a star.

"I would play hockey and go to the Blue Hall, the local movie house, to watch the pictures," Connery, 68, says in the January issue of Biography magazine of his childhood in Scotland. He got his start in acting after winning a medal in a bodybuilding competition in London, where a casting director noticed him and offered a part in a British production of the musical "South Pacific."

Cher to get back silver wedding ring

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Cher will have to wait a little longer to be reunited with the silver wedding ring Sonny Bono gave her 30 years ago.

The woman who now has the ring was supposed to give it to Cher on Friday during a live broadcast on KISS-FM radio in Los Angeles. Instead, the woman turned up with a photo of the cherished ring — and an attorney. "Cher verified the ring was hers. [The woman and her attorney] want to do a private meeting with Cher in a safe area," said Von Freeman, marketing director for KISS-FM's parent company, Jacor of Los Angeles. "She is now convinced it is for real after seeing it. This is the ring."

Rome mayor demands vandal clean up famous piazza

ROME (AP) — Rome's mayor demands that a youth who carved initials in a newly restored statue of a lion in the city's pride-and-joy piazza spends three days at cleanup. On Saturday a student was caught by security guards vandalising a stone fountain in the shape of a lion. The student told police he was using a key to carve his girlfriend's initials.

Israeli 'spies' plead not guilty

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Cypriot minister clears of graft charges

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